

Helen St. Vincent



By John J. Flint









John J. Flinn

THE
MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE
OF
HELEN ST. VINCENT.

A STORY OF THE VANISHED CITY

BY

JOHN J. FLINN.

ILLUSTRATED.

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THE EDITOR EXPLAINS.

Edmund Powers, who tells this story, was my life-long friend. I had many and the best of reasons for relying upon his unselfish devotion. On the other hand, I had given him frequent and ample proofs of my friendship and my love. I knew his secrets and he knew mine from boyhood up. I knew his faults and he knew mine. As young men, struggling for recognition, but oftener for existence, in the same profession, we had shared each other's earnings, each other's beds, each other's sorrows and each other's joys. All I had was his, all he had was mine. Our lives, our ambitions and our pursuits were so closely knit that what affected the one affected the other. If I failed in the performance of a task he would drop his own work and hasten to my assistance. If he proved unequal to an occasion single-handed, we would strive together to overcome the difficulty. I often received credit for an article inspired and practically dictated by him; he often won smiles of approval from his editors for articles which I had written and he had simply copied. We were a joint stock company, held together by the closest bonds of fraternal regard.

Later in life, when other interests and responsibilities arose, and our paths became wider apart, we remained the same good friends, if not the same companions. In his travels he never forgot me. Whenever he accomplished a good or a brilliant piece of work he was not content, though all the world approved, till I applauded. His

letters were long and interesting, and my replies were full and prompt.

After several years of wandering at home and abroad, the year 1892 found him back in Chicago. He had distinguished himself in literary work and carried with him commissions from several leading magazines and weeklies to write of Chicago and the great exposition, then nearing completion, as his fancy should dictate.

I met him frequently and we talked over old times and dreamed over old dreams together, often far into the night and sometimes far into the morning, at the club or chop-houses.

He told me of his love for Helen St. Vincent, told me everything from the beginning to the end of the story, which I now give to the public. He made me pledge my word and honor—it was the first time he had ever exacted such a pledge—that I would never divulge the secrets which are here revealed. I held this confidence sacred until the time came when his reputation was assailed—almost blasted—by the ruffian Bolton. I knew how true, how honorable, how brave he was, and when charges of treachery and cowardice were made against him I could see but one line of duty before me. My conscience tells me I did right. He believed me false—or, at least, he doubted my loyalty until—but let Edmund Powers tell his own story.

J. J. F.

EDMUND POWERS EXPLAINS.

Before proceeding with this strange and eventful history a few words of personal explanation, by way of introduction, in my judgment (if I may presume to be capable of judging with regard to anything) are necessary. I am not a willing party to this publication. I have protested against it from the beginning, and I protest against it now. I fail to see how it can do anybody any good. If those who have been so ready to point out to me what they call my plain duty only knew the facts and understood the circumstances as I, unfortunately, know and understand them, they would have hesitated before urging the performance of this painful task upon me.

In its accomplishment, as I view it, it cannot but prove painful — painful not only to myself, who must, during the unfolding of the narrative, be subjected to many unkind suspicions and aspersions, but to those who must, of necessity, be dragged into it, and to the relatives and friends of the beautiful girl, whose name it bears.

As to Miss St. Vincent herself, the one glorious consolation that strengthens me in this work is my belief that nothing my very good friends may do, and nothing I may do, can harm her now.

I think that up to the close of the past month there were no means at my command which I did not employ to the uttermost in my attempts to escape entanglement in the net of circumstances which fate, it seems, was

determined to weave about me. It must have been fore-ordained that I should become enmeshed, and at the very moment, too, when I believed that Helen St. Vincent had finally passed out of my life, as a vision of loveliness and purity vanishes in a dream.

I say that up to the close of the past month I struggled against this fatality. The betrayal of my confidence by one in whose friendship I had reason to feel I might place the most implicit trust led me about that time to abandon all hope of avoiding or shirking the consequences of my connection with Miss St. Vincent and her history. The person who exposed my secret wishes me to understand, so he says in a letter now within reach, that his friendship for me compelled him to break his word! He violated my confidence, so he adds, to save my honor!

Perhaps I am incapable just now of seeing things in their proper light. I don't know. So many things have happened of late to upset me! I have undergone a great deal of mental excitement and physical pain, with consequent loss of sleep. Aside from other causes my health must have broken down under the intense strain of the past few weeks.

I don't care to say much of my wound, which appears to be doing well. It has caused me, of course, considerable physical suffering—but physical suffering, in reality, is a relief from the mental torture I am compelled to undergo day and night on this hospital cot. I must lie flat on my back while I dictate this statement—and be patient. The doctor tells me that had Bolton aimed just a trifle higher the ball would have pierced my heart. Well, I often wish now he had aimed higher.

The news of this shooting was published widely, I am told. If Helen were alive she must have heard of it. If

she were alive she must have known the cause of it. If she were alive she must have seen that I never faltered in my devotion to her. She would have forgiven that one—that dreadful mistake of mine—the mistake that lost me everything!

Going back to that breach of confidence and the excuse offered for it, let me say that later on I may be able to understand and appreciate the delicate touches of philosophic disinterestedness in the letter alluded to. For the present I put it aside. I only refer to it again in order to be able to say that it was this breach of confidence which forced upon me finally the task I have now begun. The courts must know all, they tell me, because there is a great estate involved in this case! I must make a deposition—I must put my story into legal phrases and forms. I will tell it in my own way, or I will not tell it at all. What do I care about great estates? What does Helen St. Vincent care about great estates—now?

Just a few words more. Helen St. Vincent was well known to many of the best people of Chicago two years ago. She is well and pleasantly remembered here now by scores of acquaintances who admired her and by scores of friends who loved her. These acquaintances and friends will be grieved and shocked by the revelations I am about to make, “for the best interests of all parties concerned,” as *my* friends put it.

If I have attempted to avoid or to shirk my responsibilities in this matter, it has not been done from any selfish consideration. Helen was gone! Her going and the manner of her going I will speak of later. She was gone—gone completely! Bolton had gone, leaving me the most infamous message one man ever received from another. For over a year I have been without hope.

For months I have abandoned myself to despair. I could not believe what everything conspired to tell me was the awful truth. I do not believe it now. Trusting in the eternal justice of God, I have hidden myself away from my friends—abandoned my profession and my name—lost myself in the crowd. The less said of my connection with Helen's history, the less could be said of her relationship to anybody else. There were hundreds who believed that where I was Helen might be found also. Had she not been last seen in the company of Edmund Powers—with me? That was the worst of it! I knew better, but could not deny it. You will soon learn why I had to keep silent—why I would like to keep silent now.

E. P.

CHAPTER I.

Whether at a world's fair function, a fashionable reception, a Press Club "Night"—in the midst of the most select society Chicago had to offer during the Columbian year, or among the bohemians of this great city, in whose company she was most at home and happiest—Helen St. Vincent was always held in the highest esteem. She was admired, not alone for her beauty—which was of surpassing brilliancy—but for her native wit, her talents, her genius and her most agreeable manners. She possessed so many lovable traits of character that she disarmed envy and won the hearts of women as well as of men. No shadow was ever cast and none ever fell upon her good name.

An artist, a poet, a forcible newspaper writer—rich in descriptive power—a charming vocalist, a splendid musician, a good talker—even that rarest of things among women, a good story teller—of course she was more than welcome everywhere. She was ready to enter heart and soul into anything that promised fun or frolic, and she entered into plans for the amusement of others with all the innocent impulsiveness of a schoolgirl. She was always willing to bear more than her share of the burden of an evening's entertainment. During many months preceding the opening of the exposition, and for several months afterward, she appeared to be as free from all care or anxiety as it is possible for any of God's creatures to be.

At the same time there was a gentle but positive reserve about her which discouraged familiarity. If a rudeness occurred in her presence—and there are rude people in every mixed crowd—she would not seem to notice it, but it was never repeated. She had a most amiable way of asserting her dignity, and it was none the less effective because she asserted it with a smile, that lit up the fairest, sweetest and frankest of faces.

She knew well how to crush the most impertinent and persistent of boors by a mere glance of her lovely eyes. She could shame a fool by an almost imperceptible change in the expression of her face. She was not a prude, for she had seen the world, understood it, and was prepared to meet it in all its varying phases, with perfect confidence in herself. Having once established her position in the minds of those around her, and in the gentlest of ways, she was quick to make light of accidental or intended affronts. She was a perfect mistress of the art of forgiving—a lost art among women generally—and those whom she had forgiven were soon on as easy a footing with her as were those whom she never had occasion to forgive.

Miss St. Vincent was a little above the medium height, formed with a strong suggestion of, but not quite touching the voluptuous mold; graceful in her every attitude and movement, erect in poise, dignified in air, regular in features—a picture of health and a blonde in the very perfection of the type.

Shall I be more particular? Her complexion was pure, of transparent clearness, and at times, when she became unusually animated, flushes, varying in all the delicate tints from creamy pink to deepest crimson, would chase each other across her lovely face. Her nose was aquiline,

her lips were full, her eyes large and a dark blue of matchless power and inexpressible tenderness.

Miss St. Vincent's voice was an exceedingly clear and pleasant one, and her smiles and laughter were contagious. I have said she was a good talker. I should have added that she was one of the most patient and encouraging of listeners. In conversation she was epigrammatic, quick at reparte, but most considerate of the feelings of others. She seldom paused for a word in those early days of her visit to Chicago, and she knew how to give expression to her ideas in that good, strong, vigorous English which points plainly to something better in one's early grounding than the milk-and-watery superficialities of the faddist era in public education

There were some peculiarities in her accent at times which might have been accounted for by the fact that she had studied and traveled abroad. She spoke French fluently—it came to her naturally—and would, now and then, become slightly confused in her construction of sentences, particularly when excited; but when settled down to a quiet and comfortable conversation her accent was plainly and purely American, in a national sense the plainest and purest accent known among English-speaking people.

CHAPTER II.

During the delightful autumnal days (and nights!) of 1892, when everything was anticipation—when Chicago, standing upon tip-toe, as it were, was endeavoring to get a glimpse into the future—during the long and anxious winter and during the gloomy spring of 1893; during those months, never to be forgotten, when the marvelous White City was rising like a mirage above the dunes on the south shore of Lake Michigan—Helen St. Vincent came into contact with the most remarkable collection of men that had ever been brought together in an American city. She knew all the splendid fellows who had gravitated toward Chicago from the four corners of the globe—the painters, sculptors, authors, poets, magazine writers, newspaper workers—the bohemians who fluctuated at forbidden hours between the Press and the Whitechapel clubs—and they all knew her and admired her. I am not going very far out of the way when I say that more than one of them loved her.

She was almost invariably accompanied by a middle-aged very respectable looking person, whom she styled “Aunty,” but who was not, as a matter of fact, related to her in any way. This chaperon was seldom more than ten feet away from her lovely charge. They came, or went, together, at night, in a hack or hansom—sometimes in a private carriage. At first it was known that Miss St. Vincent had a suite of rooms at the Richelieu; later she stopped at the Auditorium. She had not been long

in the city before the fact leaked out that she was the permanent guest of a wealthy south side family, that of William P. Flanders, on Michigan avenue.

Miss St. Vincent, from this time on, was invited to society gatherings of all kinds, and attended many. She appeared to have unlimited means at her disposal. Her costumes were among the finest seen anywhere and were almost invariably described in the society columns of the newspapers. She was pronounced the belle of the great dedicatory ball at the Auditorium on the night of October 21, 1892, shortly after her arrival in Chicago. Her girl friends were the daughters of millionaires. She was as exclusive in society as she was free in bohemia. There was no middle ground for her—no middle ground upon which to meet her. Wealth and fashion claimed her on one hand; talent and genius on the other.

She did not bring her society friends into her bohemian life, nor did she carry the atmosphere or the associations of bohemia into the drawing-room. Many of those who knew her in one sphere knew her in the other, but it was remarked that she rather discouraged all attempts to create connecting links of friendship between them. I have said she was most at home and happiest among the brainy, if rather careless set, that had no appreciable regard for the conventionalities of society, but, on the contrary, was rather inclined to spurn them. She was never anywhere else so much her own dear, delightful, beautiful self, so utterly unconscious of care, so full of girlish buoyancy, animal spirits and unalloyed happiness as she was on those Press Club "Nights," when her presence seemed to charge the air around her with something akin to divinity.

"I wish," said one of the novelists of the club one evening, "I wish I could put her in a book!"

"There's character enough in her for a library of books," remarked another, dryly.

"Her place is in a poem," quietly observed a pale-faced young man, just becoming known as a sweet singer.

"May God protect her against the poets we meet around here," said the club's cynic, who couldn't miss the opportunity of running a poniard into somebody.

But she found her way into many books and into many poems, through many hearts, during this period. She became to those who surrounded her and who felt her influence, at once an inspiration and a theme.

It can do very little harm now to confess that I loved her from the first—that I loved her sincerely, passionately. I don't know how it came about, nor would it interest you if I could explain it. My opportunities of meeting her were many and I flattered myself that I was honored with her friendship from the day of our introduction. She seemed to have the impression—a very strong one, indeed—that we had met somewhere before. Like her I had traveled much, and it would not have been remarkable had we met either in America or in Europe, but I was positive then, as positive as I am now, that I never saw her face up to the time I was presented to her in Chicago.

She could not shake off the impression and she often looked at me with an earnest and puzzled expression in her face, as if endeavoring to recall some circumstance or incident in her life in which I had been a factor. But she had to abandon these attempts time and again.

"I am very certain I have met you somewhere—a long time ago," she would say, "but I cannot recollect anything more about it now."

And I would remark, perhaps :

“It cannot be, Miss St. Vincent; had you ever met me, I must, of course, have met you. I cannot recall such a meeting. I would have a very poor and very worthless memory, indeed, if, once having seen it, I could ever forget such a lovely face as yours.”

Then, as if wakened from a reverie :

“What nonsense you talk, Mr. Powers; let us change the subject.”

The impression stole upon me gradually that Miss St. Vincent liked me very much. We were often together at the fair and elsewhere. At first Mrs. Arnold, her chaperon, was generally close at hand. As we became better acquainted, however, that good woman gave us more and more latitude. She never failed to be ready at some appointed place, however, to take Helen home. One day Miss St. Vincent said to me, as I was bidding her good-bye at the Fifty-seventh street entrance :

“I should be very much pleased to have you call, Mr. Powers. I have talked about you a good deal,” she added laughingly, “and my friends are desirous of meeting you.”

I promised to avail myself of the earliest opportunity, but something happened a little later on which led me to change my mind.

I had the afternoons to myself, and my favorite hours at the fair were between 4 o'clock and dark—the nearer dark the better. After a time Helen knew just when and where to find me—generally on the avenue running between the Transportation building and the lagoon.

I was fond of looking across the water at the beautiful wooded island, with its Japanese Hooden partially hidden behind the foliage, and beyond toward the Fisheries, the

Government and the great Manufactures structures. Wherever we wandered, evening was sure to find us here.

I began to look for her, after a time, every day at a certain hour, and when something occurred to detain her or to prevent her from visiting the fair, as occasionally happened, I felt greatly disappointed and wretched.

Yet, though we took long rambles and enjoyed many happy conversations—had begun to look upon each other as old friends—there was nothing bordering even upon a flirtation in our acquaintance. We were perfectly frank and honest with each other. I could tell her how beautiful she looked, or how charming she was, and she accepted my compliments in about the same spirit that a girl would accept them from an old schoolmate or a brother. In like manner, I came to accept anything flattering she might say about me or about my work.

She had never given me the slightest encouragement—not the slightest—although, as I have said, I felt that she liked me very much indeed, until one evening—one of those transcendently beautiful evenings in July—when we were floating down the Grand Canal together in a gondola. We had been walking over the grounds the greater part of the afternoon, viewing the dream city from different points of observation, and, to rest ourselves, we had agreed upon a water trip. The gondolier had no other passengers. I slipped a piece of money into his hand as I stepped into the boat, and he understood me. We were soon moving down the lagoon. The swarthy boatman propelled the gondola gently, humming a soft Venetian air, and took no notice of those who hailed him from the landings. We were going to have this ride all to ourselves.

I believe that no matter how conversations began during those days at the great fair, they all drifted naturally into the same channel.

“I should hate to live in Chicago,” said Miss St. Vincent, “when all this shall have passed away.”

“You mean—”

“I mean the fair,” she interrupted hastily, for I believe she read my thoughts at that moment.

“Do you really mean the fair,” I remarked, “or the fair and its associations?”

“It is impossible to separate them. The associations will be destroyed with the destruction of the fair. All that is good and generous and beautiful in men and women is developed by these environments. I have noticed, everybody has noticed, that people become more generous, more kindly, more sympathetic the moment they enter the gates. The oftener they come the larger their hearts grow. The desire to love one another—that feeling which is the outgrowth of the universal brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God—is born in the hearts of those who linger here. In a few months this beautiful vision shall have disappeared, and with it all the nobler sentiments it has awakened in the breasts of those it has brought together.”

“Friendships, formed here?”

“Will be forgotten!”

“Love born here?”

“Will grow cold and perish!”

“Why, you are a pessimist, I believe, Miss St. Vincent,” said I. “How can you—you above all others—think or say such things?”

“I cannot help thinking them—I should not have said them, I know. I have no right to be disagreeable,

especially when I am with you—you, who are always so kind—and so hopeful.”

“I have heard that ten thousand times if I have heard it once,” I rejoined rather bitterly.

“What have you heard ten thousand times?” she asked anxiously, fearing, no doubt, that she had offended me.

“That I am so hopeful. People say ‘Powers, you are so hopeful!’ and they seem to pity me when they say it. I don’t understand them. There must be something in life that is plain to them but hidden from me. Am I more hopeful than other people, Miss St. Vincent?”

“You are, and that is equal to saying that you are better than other people—than a great many other people, at least.”

She laid her beautiful hand on the back of mine as she said this, and an indescribable thrill shot through me. She must have noticed how this simple, sisterly little act affected me, for she withdrew her hand quickly, and began to talk about the beauty of the scene revealed to us through the openings of the peristyle.

But the time for commonplaces between us had passed, and I caught her hand in mine and held it. She made no attempt to disengage it. I firmly believe she had made up her mind, in a moment, like a flash, that she had gone too far; that she must take the consequences sensibly; that there was no use in trying to avoid the inevitable now, and that it was best to meet it and be done with it.

I learned afterward how rapidly she could think and how decisively she could act when emergencies arose. She was endowed by God with ready wit and good sense, and she never but once, to my knowledge, spoke or acted when she was not in full possession of both.

I told her then that I loved her—that I had loved her from our first meeting ; that I was vain enough to believe she liked me. I asked her for her love. I asked her to marry me. I told her many things about myself, about my career, about my prospects. I opened my heart to her—laid myself at her feet. I must have talked to her for a considerable length of time, for the gondola, I remember, had rounded the statue of the Republic when I ceased.

While I was talking she looked at me steadily, patiently, tenderly. She made no attempt to check me. She allowed me to finish. Her hand remained in mine. I thought she would not, at that moment, have been displeased had I kissed her. Under other circumstances—in any other place—I certainly would have done so. There was love in every feature of her beautiful face. I believed that Helen St. Vincent was mine. It was not necessary for her to speak! Oh, the happiness of those few moments!

I felt a slight pressure from her hand, and she spoke. Her voice was low and calm. There was not the suspicion of a tremor in it.

“Mr. Powers,” she said, “I will not offend you by making light of what you have just said, nor will I insult you by doubting your sincerity. From the bottom of my heart I believe you. I believe you love me, and I believe you capable of loving me unselfishly and devotedly. Now, believe me when I tell you that what you ask is out of the question. It must never be mentioned between us again. I greatly admire you. It would do you no good were I to say more than this.”

She withdrew her hand.

"I never meant to say or to do anything to encourage you. I would not for the world have you think that I sought to trifle with your affections."

"You have not encouraged me, Miss St. Vincent," I stammered, "nor do I blame you in the least; but——"

"You think I might give it further thought. No, Mr. Powers, I cannot think of it at all. We have been good friends—let us continue to be good friends; won't you?"

I tried to reply, but my tongue would not move.

"Now," she continued, in that mild and amiable way she had, and she spoke more like a matron than a maiden, "don't let this trouble or discourage you. For your own sake, and for my sake, don't think of it any more—or, at least, think of it as little as you can. If I needed a friend to-day, to-morrow or next year, I would try to find Edmund Powers, and I would trust him with my life and with my honor. Could I, need I, say more than this? I am grateful for your love. I am proud that you love me. I would remember this evening through all my life with pleasure were it not for the pain it has brought to you. Here, Mr. Powers—Edmund—take this," she said, slipping a handsome diamond ring on the little finger of my left hand. "Now let us promise, no matter what happens, that we shall always be good friends."

She extended her hand, and I took it and held it. Somehow, although sorely disappointed and sick at heart, I could not help feeling that Helen St. Vincent loved me. That tender, longing, pitying expression which had stolen over her features while I was telling her of my love was there again.

It was in the dusk of evening, and we were floating in the shadow of the Administration building, close to the MacMonnies fountain. The gondolier was still

humming a soft Venetian air and appeared to be oblivious. I looked into her lovely eyes. I felt, or thought I felt, again the pressure of her hand. I forgot time, place, everything, and kissed her.

CHAPTER III.

I did not meet Helen again for several weeks. I think she tried to avoid me. I know I tried to avoid her. She had told me enough, before we parted that evening, to convince me that there existed an inseparable barrier between us. Then, again, she had treated me with such delicacy; she had talked to me with so much feeling—she had placed so much trust in my honor as a man—that I felt it a duty I owed her to avoid even a chance meeting, if I could.

I was not a gentleman of leisure. My trade or profession, or whatever people may be pleased to call it, was an exacting one. Men who write what others are expected to read have no business to fall in love. One may be a doctor, or a lawyer, or a minister of the gospel, and mix sentiment with his avocation, but the man who writes of sentiment, who is expected to understand it as it exists in others; to describe it, and, if necessary, to analyze it, must be above (or below) sentiment himself.

It was my business to turn out so many columns or so many pages of readable matter every month, just as it might be the business of the tailor to turn out so many pairs of trousers, or the shoemaker so many pairs of shoes, and I had to be as particular as either of them about the cut, the fit and the style of the articles I sent to the market. They were examined just as critically as the handiwork of the tailor or the shoemaker, and were just as liable to be pronounced misfits.

It was during those weeks that my work came to my assistance, however, and helped to sustain me in the greatest trouble I had ever experienced up to that time. The work had to be done, and I had to do it. Every man who writes—every man who loves to write and values his art as it ought to be valued—knows how speedily external influences disappear when he begins to let his thoughts flow with the ink from the point of his pen.

Even now, as I run over this portion of my life, with all its happy and congenial associations, I forget my troubles and my sorrows, and find it difficult to abstain from recalling and talking of all the scenes and incidents which interested and amused me during those glorious and, for the most part, tranquil summer days. I hardly think my case is a peculiar or an isolated one. The least impressionable of minds must have been influenced by the magnificent spectacle, magnificent succession of spectacles, of that period. There are dreams that we never forget. They become a part of our lives. We cherish them after a time as we do the dearest of realities. And there are realities that by some mysterious process of the imagination become spiritualized into dreams. Do you ever find yourself doubting that the white city had any existence in fact? I do.

Necessity compelled me to visit the fair almost daily. I preferred a ramble through the grounds, as I have said, in the early evening. An air of supreme restfulness in this hour of benediction seemed to settle upon the buildings, avenues and waterways. The twilight lent an additional charm to the classic architecture.

One of my greatest delights was to watch the people who, about this time, were directing their footsteps toward

the exits. Wearied and footsore, after a day of sight-seeing, they would turn in groups and look backward along the incomparable vistas, with wistful expressions on their faces, as though they would fain linger in the enchanted spot. Then, reluctantly, and often with sighs, sometimes tearfully, they would proceed upon their way. How often has Milton's description of the departure of the fallen angels from paradise occurred to me at such times!

But after that evening with Helen everything was changed for me. My visits to the fair brought up recollections that I could not afford to dwell upon, if I expected to perform my tasks. Had I allowed myself to drift at that time, it would have been only a question of a few days or a few months until I would have been swallowed in a whirlpool. A feeling of melancholy stole over me every time I entered the gates. I walked through the grounds day after day, seeing nothing, hearing nothing. This would not do! I realized my condition and I had will-power enough to overcome it. My salvation lay in work!—work I must do or become insane.

Having aroused myself from the stupor that threatened to overwhelm me, there was no end to the subjects that suggested themselves nor to the subjects that demanded my attention. I felt more content in my room and at my table than I was able to feel (and I tried everywhere) anywhere else. I filled pages, quires and reams with descriptions of the white city. I pictured it as the sun rose out of the lake, tinting the domes and minarets in the golden hues of a summer awakening! I sketched it in the noonday glare! I painted it in the glow of sunset, or bathed in the mellow light of an August moon!

I worked hard, early and late, and I worked conscientiously. Letters of approval came to me from editors and readers. More substantial evidences of appreciation came to me in the shape of handsome checks. I was encouraged to do my best, and I did my very best—abandoned myself absolutely to my work in the hope that Helen St. Vincent would pass out of my sight, out of my memory, and out of my life.

This went on for weeks, and my labor and confinement began to tell upon me. I was being missed, besides, in my usual haunts, and questions asked by my acquaintances and friends with regard to my seclusion became rather embarrassing. It was known that I had been often in Miss St. Vincent's society, and it was a matter or current belief that she favored me with something more than her friendship. I feared that any apparent change in our relationship might attract attention or give rise to comment. So I determined to show myself here and there, where she was likely to be seen.

We met face to face at a private reception one evening, and the light that illumined her beautiful eyes told me plainly that she was glad to see me. As soon as an opportunity presented itself she was with me. She expressed regret that I had locked myself up, as she put it, but she knew I must have been working very hard, for she had seen the results of my labor in print. She talked of my work, praised it, and wondered how I could keep up under such a strain. Then she talked of herself, of her pictures, which hung in the first room, near the door, in the American collection of the Art building, and how they had been praised by critics and collectors. She asked if I had seen her articles in the newspapers, signed "H. St. V.," and when I told her I had read every one of them she

insisted upon "my honest opinion" of their quality, as literary contributions. I could only tell her, as everybody told her, that she had struck a vein which could not fail to win her distinction for originality, and that her style was clear, forcible and finished.

Then she said, laughingly, "Mr. Powers, once when I asked your opinion of an article I had prepared for publication, I think you attempted to discourage me. You appear to have changed your mind regarding the quality of my work!"

"Not at all, Miss St. Vincent," I replied. "You told me then that you wrote for the pleasure it afforded you, and not for compensation of any other kind. Am I right? Well, that is what I disapproved of and that is why I tried to discourage you."

"Then you will be glad to learn that I have become—"

We were interrupted here. Miss St. Vincent was wanted at the piano. Wouldn't she be so good? So many were desirous of hearing her sing!

Helen St. Vincent was entirely free from affectation. There was not a grain of silliness in her composition. Her good, common sense was with her at all times.

"Please excuse me, Mr. Powers," she whispered. "I'll sing for them. It will only take a few minutes, and I'll come back to you."

She sat down at the piano and ran her fingers over the keys. Then she struck a few chords, paused, turned on the stool, glanced around the room until her eyes rested on me, and then, half apologetically, half playfully, she said:

"I'll try something new. It is simple. The words were written by Mr. Powers; the music is my own."

Before I had time to think, let alone to offer a protest, she had played a short, dreamy prelude, and was singing—

WHEN THE TIDE IS GOING OUT.

Andante tranquillo.

p legato.

1. Peace - ful as a babe in slum - ber,
2. We might live and love for - ev - er,

poco rit *pp*

Flows the chan - nel from the sea Deep - er than its
If for - ev - er we might sail In - ward with the

cresc. *poco rit*

fath - oms num - ber Is the love you bear to me.
stream and nev - er Feel the shock of sud - den gale.

cresc. *p* *poco rit e dimin.*

poco piu animato

Could I ques . tion God a . bove me, Could my heart find
Not the swell . ing wave, my dar . ling, Not the flow . ing

mf

poco cres. *Affettuoso* *poco riten.* *con espressione.*

room for doubt, I would ask you, will you love me When the
rais . es doubt, Hearts grow colder, on . ly, dar . ling, When the

mf

con passione

tide is go . ing out I would ask you, will you
tide is go . ing out Hearts grow colder, on . ly,

f

poco rit. *molto riten.*

love me When the tide is go . ing out
dar . ling, When the tide is go . ing out.

colla voce. *smorz.*

When the tide is going out . 9 .

dolce *poco rit*

a tempo *dimin*

3. See yon' bea . con, soft . ly burn . ing,

Guides with con . stant faith . ful glow, Ships de . part . ing,

poco cresc. *poco cresc.*

ships re . turn . ing, Wheth . er in the ebb or flow!

When the tide is going out . 4

poco piu animato.

So thy love will guide me, sail - ing, E'en tho' shal - lows

Affettuoso.

s are a - bout, And I'll trust thee, dear, un - fail - ing, When the

colla voce.

con abbandono.

tide is go - ing out And I'll trust thee, dear, un -

colla voce.

rit *molto rit*

fail - ing, When the tide is go - ing out

p *riten.* *perdendosi.* *ppp*

When the tide is going out. ♯.

She sang these very simple verses—verses I had composed so long ago that they had almost passed out of my recollection—in that rich and pure contralto voice of hers, with such a warmth of sentiment and such a depth of feeling that she had risen and regained her place—her place! my God! how naturally it comes to me to say that!—at my side before her enraptured audience had recovered itself sufficiently to give the sweet girl the applause she was entitled to.

As for myself, I had lost consciousness of everything save her. She seemed to be mine to have and to hold, to love and to cherish. It required all the self-command I could summon to restrain myself from taking her in my arms and carrying her out of that room—away from that crowd.

But she was there to help me at that moment, and she brought me around to a realization of the absurdity of my impulse by asking, with all the simplicity of her nature—

“Have I offended you, Mr. Powers?”

“Indeed, you haven’t,” I replied. “You have only succeeded in charming me—again!”

She had found the verses in a scrapbook belonging to Miss Jessie Flanders, she told me. They were credited to me, and she had copied them.

“Now don’t laugh, nor think me foolish,” she continued, “when I tell you that I believe you wrote those verses for me. You could not have written them for anybody else!”

“They were written a thousand miles from here,” I answered, “and three years, at least, before I ever had the pleasure of meeting you!”

“Oh, that doesn’t prove anything! You may have had no knowledge of my existence, although I am still as

positive as ever that we have met before. When I read those verses I felt that they were not unfamiliar—that I had heard you repeat them sometime, somewhere! How strange it is you cannot help me!”

She spoke earnestly. I had not the slightest idea but that she firmly believed every word she uttered. If she were not so entirely rational on all other subjects—if she were not possessed of common sense to such a remarkable degree for one of her age—she was then scarcely 20—and if her ideas were not so uniformly practical, almost matter of fact, as to have attracted the general attention of her friends, I might have questioned her sanity.

I am thankful now that I never doubted her—that I never believed her the victim of a delusion. I am thankful that when myself, in thought, word or deed, I never did her an injustice—no, not even when I made my greatest mistake, and when she had a right to believe I thought her false to me. If I could only have explained—if I had only a chance of explaining then—or now!

The knowledge came to me later on, and all too soon, that these convictions, strange as they appeared then, and to which she clung persistently, had something more than imagination behind them.

Days—not many—passed before I saw her again. The meeting this time was one I would give the world if I could blot out of my memory.

I was standing near the accustomed place, looking across the lagoon, from a point about a hundred feet north of the golden door of the Transportation building, when Helen St. Vincent, pale and trembling, almost swooning, appeared before me.

“Mr. Powers, may I trust you?”



"A PICTURE OF HEALTH AND A BLONDE IN THE VERY PERFECTION
OF THE TYPE."

"I think it is not necessary for me to answer that question, Miss St. Vincent," I replied, hardly knowing what to say, "For Heaven's sake, what has happened?"

She hesitated a moment, looking at me as though she were trying to read my soul, and said:

"You are my friend, are you not?"

"Why, Helen," said I, soothingly, "of course I am; what is the matter? Tell me!"

She still hesitated, her eyes fixed upon me. I took her arm and supported her while we walked to the railing inclosing the lagoon.

"Oh, Mr. Powers," she almost moaned, "I am in great trouble, and nobody can help me but you!"

"Then, if I can help you, Helen, God knows I shall, no matter what the cost!"

"And you will respect my confidence—always? And you will promise me that you will think no wrong of me, even if you do not learn everything now?"

"I promise you, Helen. Trust me!"

Then she talked rapidly and excitedly, telling me a story which, with all my faith in her, it was hard for me to believe. It did not seem real. She concluded by making a request that stunned me. It was unexpected and extraordinary.

I looked into her beautiful face and saw a world of sorrow—almost an eternity of anguish—reflected there. The girlish smile had vanished. Her magnificent eyes were luminous. Her gaze was fixed appealingly upon me. Her lips were slightly parted and quivering. She was as white as marble. Her bosom heaved convulsively.

But I was dumb.

"I told you I believed you loved me sincerely, devotedly," she said, "and that if I ever needed a friend I would come

to you—that I would trust my love and my honor in your hands. Oh, if I could only make you understand me, Edmund—if I could only make you feel that I am in such sore need of your love now!—that the tide is going out!”

I could not speak. My mind was in a tumult.

She came closer

“It cannot be possible that you have lost faith in me—that you have lost your regard for me—already?”

“I have lost neither, Helen,” said I. “I love you—God knows I love you—but it is because I love you—let me think, Helen!”

“Oh, Mr. Powers,” she exclaimed, “there is no time to think. There is time only to act!”

“You fully understand what my compliance means—to yourself and to me?”

“Yes, I fully understand.”

“And you are certain that there is nothing else that can be done now?”

“Nothing else.”

A Columbian guard was approaching us.

“Helen, if I do as you wish——”

“Only trust me as I trust you!”

The Columbian guard drew nearer.

Darkness was beginning to fall. The dome of the Administration building had just flashed out in all its splendor at the end of the broad avenue on which we stood. The fairy island across the water was bedecking itself in prismatic glory. A merry gondola party was floating by, almost at our feet. The day crowds were surging toward the northern exits.

Helen placed her right hand in mine and her left upon my right shoulder. There was a supplicating light in her lovely face that I could not resist.

"I would not ask you to do this for me, Edmund," she said, "if I did not love you, and hope to be yours forever!"

"I will do as you wish, Helen!"

The Columbian guard passed close to us, turned, paused a moment, seemed to scrutinize our faces—and disappeared in the crowd.

"I will do as you wish, Helen," I repeated. "I have not hesitated a moment on my own account—but on yours. There is no sacrifice I would not make for you, my love!"

"Oh, thank you, thank you," she murmured, and a sigh of relief escaped her.

Scarcely had she uttered her words of gratitude before a heavy hand was laid upon my shoulder, where hers had been a moment before.

I turned about quickly, and the owner of the hand exclaimed:

"What! Is it you?"

The speaker was Inspector Henderson, of the Central station, a man I had known well in the old days, but had not met for years. He appeared to be greatly but not disagreeably surprised. Without giving me a chance to speak, he said, extending his hand, which I grasped warmly:

"Ah, I beg your pardon, Mr. Powers. I beg your pardon."

Turning to the Columbian guard who had passed us a few seconds before, and who had attracted my attention, he said:

"You must be mistaken, Jennings!"

"I am not," replied Jennings, positively. "That is the woman! Don't you see it is the woman?"

Miss St. Vincent caught my hand again and pressed it.

Addressing me, Inspector Henderson asked :

“May I inquire who this young lady is?”

“You may,” I answered. “SHE IS MY WIFE!”

Henderson looked me straight in the eye. For a moment his features, as the light of an electric lamp fell upon them, took on a cruelly severe expression. Then his eyes brightened, the severity of his face softened into a smile, and, raising his cap to Miss St. Vincent, he said, addressing both of us :

“I beg your pardon.”

Turning to the Columbian guard, he said :

“Jennings, you are mistaken.”

“I am not,” replied Jennings, with stubborn positiveness. “I cannot be mistaken.”

“I say you are,” rejoined the inspector, rather warmly, taking the Columbian guard by the arm and leading him away.

A mist had encircled us, and there was promise of a shower. Miss St. Vincent took my arm. Without uttering a word we moved along with the crowd.

As we were passing between the northern end of the Transportation building and Choral hall a man brushed up against me and whispered :

“Ed., my boy, I hope you know what you are doing. You used to have good sense. You did not tell me the truth just now, but for the sake of old times I will believe you. I don’t understand this matter. I will depend upon you to help me out. Drop me a line. Here, take this; it will be useful to you. Cover her up. I’ll keep close to you till you’re out of the grounds.”

Dear old Henderson, always as true as steel! I shook his hand again and gave him my word of honor that he would not regret his generous act.

In the meantime I was tearing a newspaper wrapper off the bundle. It contained a mackintosh. Miss St. Vincent was soon enveloped in it. The rain was falling by this time, and she removed her sailor hat and covered her head with the hood, hiding the hat beneath the ample cape of the gossamer.

Henderson was at my heels.

"I believe in the young lady, too, Edmund," he whispered. "There are spotters at the exits—be careful," and he disappeared.

We passed safely through the Sixty-second street wicket. I called a carriage and we entered it. The driver was a muscular fellow, with rugged face and a piercing black eye. As he was about to mount to his seat I said to him :

"Drive away from here without a moment's delay ; don't let anything interfere ; I'll pay your price."

I had caught a glimpse of Jennings, who was at that moment passing through the revolving gate. He must have seen me, for he ran toward the carriage.

I shouted to the driver :

"Let nobody stop you—I'll pay your price, whatever it may be! Go!"

Jennings had the reins of one of the horses, close to the bit, in his grasp, and was commanding the driver to dismount.

There were two rapid cracks of a whip that sounded like pistol shots, followed by a plunge of the horses and a cry of pain, and we were off.

I turned to my lovely companion. She had fainted.

CHAPTER IV.

Helen had fainted and I felt thankful. Had not consciousness forsaken her she would have seen Jennings lying on the street in the full glare of an electric lamp with a crimson scar across his upturned and ghastly face! The picture was instantaneous. I was horrified for a moment. Then I became pitiless. It was his own fault. To protect Helen from the disgrace which he would have brought upon her I would have killed him.

Our driver applied his whip savagely. We turned westward at the first cross street, dodging vehicles, cable and electric cars, and endangering the lives of pedestrians. We were soon rolling smoothly along Grand boulevard on our way northward.

Helen had recovered from her swoon. Carriages, cabs, coupes, four-in-hands, crowded omnibuses were before us, behind us and all around us, taking in the entire width of the driveway—all moving like a mighty flood, in one direction—toward the city.

The driver lashed his horses continuously and allowed but few vehicles to overtake or pass him. He had something on his mind now besides the promised fee. The sooner and the farther he was away from the southern part of the city the better it would be for him. It was probable that he had killed the Columbian guard! It was probable that a patrol wagon filled with policemen would meet him at any of the

intersecting streets. Once in the crowded thoroughfares of the south side he would be comparatively safe.

The telephone wires, he knew and I knew, were even now carrying a description of the carriage, its driver and its occupants to the different police stations.

There was one thing he could do, and he did it at the first opportunity.

A carriage stood in front of one of the great apartment-houses to the left. Ours stopped alongside of it. A few words passed between the drivers. We knew what to do, without being told, when the door of our carriage opened. The transfer was made in an instant. I handed our driver a bill, which was satisfactory, and thanked him.

"Have him drive to Michigan avenue and Twenty-second street," I ordered.

The new driver turned his horses northward, the other taking his place in front of the apartment-house. We were again moving rapidly toward the city.

Helen, still enveloped in the mackintosh, was silently gazing out of the window on her side, into the blank darkness, only relieved now and then by the lights from street lamps and passing carriages. I caught an occasional glimpse of her face. She was very pale.

I had said a few commonplace things, but my words must have fallen as coldly upon her ears as they fell upon mine.

The inevitable reaction following the excitement of the past hour had seized me. I found myself wondering whether I had not made the mistake of my life. I confess that for a short time during that ride my thoughts became wholly selfish. I loved Helen St. Vincent—but was this the Helen St. Vincent I loved?

Had the sweet girl accepted my love and my hand when I offered them to her, or had she at any time afterward spoken or written a word, hinting to me that she had reconsidered her resolution, I would have been wild with joy.

Now I was going to marry her—to marry her privately, where licenses and unnecessary publicity could be dispensed with—and my heart felt heavy as lead within me. Was there ever such a marriage as this was going to be? Was ever a man who was going to marry the woman he loved, and a woman so tender, so good, so beautiful as Helen St. Vincent, so wretched as I?

Oh, what a wise provision nature has made to uphold the dignity of womanhood! What a grand thing is that reserve which compels the pure woman to be silent regarding her love, no matter how fiercely it may burn, until it is legitimatized in the sight of God—that reserve which restrains her from lowering herself in the estimation of any man, above all, in the estimation of the one man whose affection she craves!

I could follow Helen St. Vincent's thoughts almost as well as I could my own. I knew how proud, how high-spirited and how pure of mind she was. She had shrunk away from me as I attempted to make her position in the carriage more comfortable, and I knew the reason why as well as if she had told me in so many words.

She had been driven to the doing of a thing against which every fibre of her nature revolted—because her sense of duty told her it must be done. She abhorred the act and loathed herself for committing it. She felt debased and dishonored—a queen dethroned in my presence.

No matter though there were ten thousand reasons why she should have taken this step to one against it, she could

not reconcile her womanly pride to a thing which degraded her, even for the time being, in her own estimation and in mine. I know now that it was her high sense of duty—her great belief in my love for her, and her great love for me—that had led her to take this course, but I did not know it then. How could I?

She had asked me to marry her!

She had asked me to marry her and had asked me—but wait. She had coupled with her astounding request a condition which had proved that her thoughts and motives were pure and unselfish. I was to marry her, but I was not to be her husband—not for some time, if ever?

She had accepted my protestations of love and friendship in good faith. She believed everything I had told her. I had pledged my love and life to her. She had taken me at my word.

My mind reverted to the story she had told me this evening—told me so hurriedly, so excitedly, and yet so clearly. Fashioned as skilfully as the key to the plot of a drama of masterly construction, every word was full of meaning; every sentence full of force.

I knew her to be possessed of an intellect capable of penetrating and illuminating perplexities. The quickness of her insight was almost phenomenal. Had she been a man this evening and not a woman—a woman, too, moving in the first circles of polite society, and consequently subject to almost slavish conventional restraints—she would have speedily found a way out of the difficulty, unaided by any friend. But had she been a man, no such difficulty could have arisen.

She was gifted with that marvelous power of comprehension—that faculty for taking in and weighing and measuring things at a glance, a faculty not uncommon

among bright women, but rare among men, which made it unnecessary for her to receive more than a hint of what you intended saying. She anticipated the thoughts forming in your mind and the words you were collecting to express them. One of her peculiarities, I had often noticed, was her habit of following me with her eyes and lips while I spoke, and then, at a certain point, catching the unuttered part of a question or a remark, and making a reply which fitted it exactly.

So, remembering all this, I was not surprised that, even in her agitation, she had been able to condense a chapter into a few lines.

But the story itself!—the substance and not the manner of her telling it—how was I, knowing as little of the facts as I knew then, to accept it without question?—to accept it as a child accepts a fairy tale from the lips of its mother—with amazement, perhaps, but with unquestioning trust!

The night of our meeting at the reception, when she had sung that song of mine to an air of her own, and had expressed such strange convictions concerning it, I had taken my departure early. I found that I was monopolizing the attention of my beautiful friend; that my popularity among several good fellows, who were present, was suffering in consequence, and that the longer I lingered near her the more difficult it would be to abandon hope—a hope my better judgment told me must be abandoned absolutely.

I had too much faith in Helen—too much respect for her—to doubt what she told me that evening on the Grand Canal, in the shadow of the Administration building, after I had kissed her. I had kissed her because I could not help it—no more than I could help looking into her face, suffused with blushes, and her eyes overflowing with

tears, and vowing before God that I would always be her friend. She made no pretense of being offended. Helen never pretended; she was above all pretense, but she shamed me by inquiring quietly :

“Mr. Powers, let me ask you if that is the way you intend to exhibit your friendship for me?”

I begged her pardon, and I felt that I had suffered in her esteem, and said so.

“No,” she said, “but let this be the end of it. If this kiss will seal our friendship I don’t regret it. You are too much of a gentleman—you are too much of a man—to make me commit myself. You would like, perhaps, to hear me say I love you, Edmund, but you would not like to hear me say it at the expense of my self-respect.”

It was not necessary that she should say it—she looked it.

“Now, this matter has gone so far that I must be plain with you,” she continued. “It is best that you should understand me and my position. I have never had a thought of a flirtation with you. We have unconsciously arrived at a point where we must stop or be plunged into lifelong unhappiness. I’ll tell you what I think : I think that after a time we—you will remember our meeting as one of the very pleasant incidents of the fair, but your work and your associations will gradually crowd me into that corner of your heart where you shall have stored many other happy and unhappy recollections.”

I was about to protest when she stopped me.

“I don’t mean that you will ever forget me, or that you will ever cease to love me ; but you will remember me as you will remember the scenes around us here, and you will love me as you will love the memory of the fair when it shall have passed away ! One will be lost to you as irretrievably as the other !”

She spoke softly, gazing at me fondly the while.

“Now, as for myself” she continued, and her hand was laid upon mine again, only to be instantly removed, “let me be perfectly candid. The dearest friend I have in all the wide world is my uncle, Dr. William Bolton, of Boston. I cannot tell you how dear he is to me. You would not understand me. Henry Bolton, his son, my cousin, and myself were reared together in Dr. Bolton’s house. It has always been understood that we would marry. His father and mine have looked upon it as a settled thing. I have not seen Henry for five years, although I had frequent appointments to meet him while I was abroad. He was little more than a boy when he was sent to Europe to complete his education; a boy in face and a boy in manner. I expect to marry Henry Bolton when he returns, because it is my uncle’s greatest desire that I should. I have given my promise to Henry and I will keep it. His letters are not frequent, but they show that he has not changed his mind. Now, all this sounds very cold, very business-like, to you,” she added, smiling, “but that is just the way we will have to look at it. I would no more think of breaking my word or causing his father or my father any disappointment than I would think of doing anything intentionally to wound you. Do you believe me?”

“I do, Helen. How could I doubt you?”

“As I said before, you are too much of a gentleman—too much of a man—to ask me to commit myself further, under the circumstances. But I cannot help saying one thing, Mr. Powers. You are the only man living I would make this explanation to—the only man living, who in my estimation, is entitled to it.”

I thanked her for her trust in me. To have attempted to plead then in my own behalf, I felt, would have been offensive to her. I knew I had her love—and I knew that she intended to let me know it, delicately but unmistakably. Yet, she saw her duty plainly marked out before her, and I was convinced that her decision was final.

All of this came back to me at the reception, and yet I could not understand why she received me with such undisguised pleasure, or why she had sung that song! She was even gay that night. She clung to me, too, as I have explained, greatly to my embarrassment, and insisted upon my remaining later, when I was telling her of my intention to leave. Yet the thought that Helen St. Vincent was trifling with me never entered my mind. I believed she was trying to make me forget my disappointment.

And now, as we roll along in the carriage, I remember how, when I was leaving that night, she took advantage of an opportunity to say to me—

“I received a letter from my uncle, Dr. Bolton, this morning. I’ll tell you about it some time”—which meant that she expected to see me again. I had made up my mind, however, that I would avoid meeting her in the future, if possible.

As this remark of hers concerning the letter occurs to me, I remember how happy she looked when she made it. There must have been something in that letter which she believed would be interesting to me; which, perhaps, would send a gleam of hope into my desolate heart.

I knew nothing of its contents then, of course, but I have read that letter since, and it is just as well that I should make them known to you now.

Dr. Bolton began in a most affectionate strain, telling her how dear she was to her aunt and himself, and how proud they were of her. She was dearer to him, he said, than any child of his own could be. He was glad she was enjoying her visit to Chicago; spoke of the Flanders, Leaks, Oldhams, Hutchings, Ingrams, Parkhams, and other families of wealth and prominence with whom Helen was on intimate terms, and asked to be remembered to them; thought her pictures should win first prizes; praised her writings, and referred particularly to a little poem of hers which had lately appeared in one of the Boston dailies; expressed a hope that he would be able to visit the fair in September, and closed, as he had begun, most affectionately. Beneath his signature, however, in an unsteady hand, was written:—"Henry has been here. Should he visit you in Chicago, please advise me at once. I cannot say more than this now. Who is Mr. Powers?"

I don't know that I would have felt any lighter in my heart or any easier in my mind had I known the contents of this letter that night, as our carriage turned into Michigan avenue.

I was not myself. That was plain. Here was Helen beside me—Helen the dearest and loveliest girl in the world! and I had made no attempt to lighten the burden she was carrying. I had treated her, not only coldly, but almost scornfully. I had not made an effort to bring about an understanding that, perhaps, might set her right—might set everything right!

But how could anything be set right when she had made me promise to ask no questions—when she had insisted that I should trust her blindly?

I became resentful. She asked too much. She had taken advantage of my love for her and had overstepped all bounds.

My love for her! The thought shot through my mind that Helen St. Vincent by this time must have come to despise my love and myself! And with this thought came the conviction that I had been—that I was—a most contemptible coward, utterly unfit to be the companion of this dear girl, certainly unworthy of her trust or affection. Why, I was not even her friend! I had not treated her as a gentleman should always treat a woman—a woman who was nothing to him except a woman.

I remembered how Helen had accidentally or intentionally made a distinction when she said to me, "Mr. Powers, you are too much of a gentleman—too much of a man." No, it could not have been an accident. She meant to distinguish between the terms. She intended to raise the man above the gentleman, as all true men raise the woman above the lady. A gentleman may not be a man, but a man must be a gentleman. Society makes the one; God makes the other.

That was what Helen meant. She had formed in her mind an ideal that was something more than the smiling, affable, courteous, dress-suited cavalier of the drawing-room—of a gentleman who, when occasion required, could be every inch a man, regardless of conventionalities, regardless of rules and usages, regardless of everything save the code of manliness drawn up by mother nature and sanctified by the Creator.

Viewing my position and hers, even from the coldest and most practical of standpoints, I had not treated her right. This girl, whose common sense had been remarked a hundred times by others, as well as myself,

this cultivated, intellectual, womanly young woman, could not by any possibility be a mere creature of impulse. No unsound mental or moral force could have guided or impelled her in this matter. She must have seen her way clearly from the first—her way and mine—for she thought of me always, I believe. She must have known that there was only one course possible, and she had had the courage to take that course.

And I? I had pledged her my love. I had sworn allegiance to her; I had poured into her patient ears protestations of undying devotion. I had vowed before God, no matter what might happen, always to be her friend!

I wore upon my finger the ring she had placed there as a token of our mutual alliance. I remembered with a thrill of delight the kiss she had not denied me, because it had sealed our compact.

And now, when my love, my devotion, my trust, my friendship were put to a test, when something had happened, I was debating in my mind whether Helen St. Vincent had not demanded too great a sacrifice of me.

I drew her to me. As I touched her a tremor passed over her yielding form, as though she, too, were thrilled by the divine inspiration that had taken possession of my entire being. I said to her :

“Helen, God helping me, I will never doubt you again! Forgive me.”

My heart was overflowing and I could say no more. But I had said enough. She understood me. My thoughts, I believe, were as an open book to her.

For an instant her soft cheek rested against mine. Then her beautiful face was buried in my breast. She was sobbing, and scalding tears were gathering in my eyes.

CHAPTER V.

At Twenty-second street I stopped the carriage and we alighted. I paid the driver all he demanded, and more, and dismissed him. There was a drug store close at hand. We entered it. A telephone order brought a hansom in a few minutes. I placed Helen in the cab; the number of Mr. Flanders' residence was given to the driver. She was off, and I was left alone on the street corner.

An hour later I was sitting beside her, still pale, but calmly beautiful, and even making a brave effort to smile at some remark of mine, in a drawing room coach on the night St. Paul express, bound for Milwaukee.

Mrs. Arnold and several valises occupied opposite seats. The chaperon was heavily veiled. Through the veil, however, I could see that a white bandage partially covered her left temple.

I made no inquiries. I was content then to accept everything as I found it. All the clouds that had enveloped my mind earlier in the evening had cleared away. I trusted everything to Helen. I had so much faith in her that had she asked me to jump from the flying train I would have taken the plunge with perfect confidence in the result.

I have heard much of the indescribable something—the stimulation, exhilaration or exaltation—that comes to one who holds the reins of a racer in his hands as the noblest of beasts seems to glide over without touching the even surface of the track, and to a limited extent I have

experienced that delight. I think I know what lovers of the horse mean when they speak of losing self-consciousness; of becoming merged, as it were, into the animal; of the electric current that passes through the reins and thrills the driver until his whole being pulsates responsively to the magnetic motion of his steed.

But give me the iron horse for a ride from anxiety into forgetfulness! I will soon leave the cares and sorrows of life behind—behind in a cloud of smoke and a shower of sparks! Give me the screeching, plunging express train, bounding wildly, I care not whence, through the blackness of night; the mad dashing over bridges and culverts; the reckless swaying around sharp curves—the shriek of the whistle, the rumbling through tunnels, the headlong flight past everything, into futurity—whatever it may be—with the clickety, clickety, click-click of the wheels for an accompaniment, and I will find peace, contentment, confidence!

The future never rose before me so tranquil and bright as it did that night on the train with Helen. I felt as though a terrible load had been lifted from my heart. I was happy—very happy. Even the shadows of care that passed over the sweet face of Helen now and then, and the anxious expression that from time to time stole into her beautiful eyes, did not, could not, cause me any uneasiness.

She did her best to hide all traces of her recent agitation. I could see that it cost her an effort every time she smiled, but I compelled her to make the effort. We talked—or rather, I talked—about everything but our own affairs. I repeated some of the sayings of the men at the club; I gave her my opinion of a recent book; I described some scenery in the far northwest; I even quoted poetry. She listened but said little.

Her hand rested upon the back of mine as it had on that memorable evening at the fair. She did not remove it even when Mrs. Arnold looked in our direction and must have seen it there. Mrs. Arnold evidently knew all and approved of all.

Helen's love was pure and innocent, and she felt that her hand had a right to rest on mine. There was nothing false about her—not even false modesty. A little later when she had become fatigued, she laid her head upon my shoulder without hesitation, and so naturally that the act scarcely attracted the notice of the occupants of other seats in the coach who were facing us.

If I had known all that had happened, If I had any knowledge of the things that were about to happen—if I knew even as much as Helen knew, instead of feeling perfectly tranquil and unspeakably happy that night because of her great trust in me and her great love for me, I would—not because, but in spite of them—have been the most miserable of men!

Helen hath kept back many things from me. She told me just enough—no more—to show me how much she stood in need of the love, and, if not the love, the friendship I had promised her. Her good judgment told her that further information at the time would only lead to other complications and difficulties, perhaps to disaster. I can fully understand her reasons for this reserve now, and appreciate them at their true worth.

She loved Dr. Bolton, I think, more fondly than she loved any other person on earth—more fondly than she loved her father, more fondly than she loved me. Her affection for the old physician, the guardian of her childhood, the good counselor of her girlhood, the watchful, prayerful, devoted friend of her womanhood, was of

spiritual purity, self-sacrificing and intense. To do him a kindness, to spare him a heartache, I believe she would have freely given her life. Did it not occur to me once that she would in the same cause, have given that which was dearer to her than life?

And now I must turn back and speak of the events which led to my meeting with Helen this afternoon.

Accompanied by Mrs. Arnold, her chaperon, Helen stepped into Mr. Flanders' private carriage, which had called for her about an hour after my departure from the reception, and was driven to that gentleman's handsome residence on Michigan avenue.

Years ago, in a small manufacturing town in Massachusetts, young Flanders had been the schoolmate, bosom friend and inseparable companion of William Bolton. As young men, one entered a mercantile house in Boston, the other a medical college in New York. Years passed, and the friendship formed in youth was cemented by a marriage which made the sister of Mr. Flanders the wife of Dr. Bolton, then attaining prominence as a physician in Boston. Like thousands of others from the old bay state, William Flanders decided to cast his lot early in the '70s, with the wonderful city which was then recovering from the shock of an awful catastrophe, and recovering so rapidly as to challenge the admiration as well as the astonishment of humanity.

For twenty years Mr. Flanders had been regarded as one of the most enterprising as well as one of the most prosperous merchants of Chicago. Beginning here with some capital, he had accumulated great wealth. Blessed with a wife who entered readily and heartily into all of his plans, and with a daughter whose charming face and

manners made her a special attraction for the young of both sexes, the home of the Flanders had long held an undisputed position as one of the leading society centers of the south side.

Helen St. Vincent had at first been induced to enter the residence of the Flanders on the pretense that her visit should be merely temporary. Dr. Bolton had written Mr. Flanders regarding her, and had requested his old-time friend and brother-in-law to offer her the hospitality of his home. "It will be necessary," wrote the doctor, "to handle her with the greatest tact, as her independent spirit would revolt the moment she discovered, or thought she discovered, any attempt to establish a guardianship over her. She has traveled the wide world over since she left school three years ago, with Mrs. Arnold, her old nurse, as her sole companion. She has means of her own to satisfy not only her wants but her most extravagant fancies—if she had any. From the time of her mother's death she has been my child, or, rather, our child, for Ellen loves her as I do. Her father, as you know, is a slave to his passion for books. His greatest—I sometimes think his only—desire in this life is to be permitted to enjoy the undisturbed seclusion of his library. As I, above all men, know how truly he mourned and still mourns the loss of his young wife, my sister, Helen's mother—how narrowly he escaped from melancholia, and even from a greater malady, how what was at first a diversion has grown into a confirmed habit, almost a disease; as I understand all this and remember the cause that changed the entire course of one of the brightest and most promising of lives, I cannot censure him. He has not been unmindful of the interests of Helen, though he has always rather shunned than sought her. I know and she knows

that he loves her, yet her presence makes him unhappy. This I can understand, also, for the first faint cry that escaped from her infant lips was echoed by the sigh on which her mother's soul was wafted into eternity. Now, my dear old friend," continued the doctor, "Helen prefers the freedom of hotel life, so she writes, but hotel life in Chicago from the present time to the close of your great exposition, I have answered, will not be altogether suitable even to a girl as thoroughly sensible as she. I hope you will be able to manage it somehow. I will feel much more content when she is an inmate of your home. Of course, you will trust her in everything, as I do, and allow her all the freedom in her goings and comings she may require. Mrs. Arnold is faithful, but Helen is perfectly able to take care of herself. She knows what society demands, and she has a chaperon who understands her and loves her. It is due to you that I should mention another fact before I close. Helen has been engaged to marry my son Henry, with the approval of her father and myself, since she was 15 years of age. The two loved each other dearly as children. Henry has not been pursuing a course of late that should entitle him to her love. I believe they correspond regularly and I am certain she has no knowledge of his waywardness. I have kept it from her in the hope that he would see the mistake he is making. But I very much fear he has gone too far already. If what I have learned quite recently should turn out to be true, I would rather see her a corpse than the wife of Henry Bolton. But why make her unhappy? She will learn all about him little by little, and learn to despise him soon enough. This is all, I believe that you need to know, my dear William. For old times' sake, I know you will be good to my darling girl."

Mrs. Flanders and Jessie, of course, called upon Helen frequently while she had apartments at the Richelieu and the Auditorium. Their calls were returned. Helen's circle of acquaintances and admirers widened as she became known. The very necessities of the case compelled her finally to become a member of Mr. Flander's family. She could not receive male callers at an hotel. She had hoped to be able to avoid the responsibilities of society, but she was too brilliant, too beautiful, and they forced themselves upon her. However, she avoided them whenever possible, and seldom lost an opportunity of making a trip into the enchanted land of bohemia, where her lungs, her spirits and her imagination could have full play.

Mrs. Flanders and her daughter learned to understand Miss St. Vincent very soon. She was perfectly frank with them, as she was with everybody. She had no secrets—none during those early days of her visit to Chicago. She talked of the people she met at the Woman's building, in the Art building, at the art exhibits, at the club gatherings and at homes that were not known or recognized among the set in which the Flanders family moved. She talked so enthusiastically of the fine fellows she met on those Press Club "Nights," that Mr. Flanders expressed a desire to accompany her some evening, and even to bring Jessie with him, but Helen did not exhibit any great interest in his proposition, and the matter was dropped.

She had mentioned Edmund Powers frequently up to a certain time, and after that it was noticed that she scarcely ever referred to him. Jessie, a perfectly good-natured girl, had quizzed her about this Mr. Powers at the breakfast table one morning, as she had frequently quizzed her

about him before. On this particular morning, however, Helen's face turned scarlet and then almost deathly pale.

Jessie's good breeding and good sense came to her assistance at once, and the subject was changed. After that, references to Mr. Powers were simply those growing out of the fact that he was contributing certain articles on the fair to the magazines, and were matters of course. Helen could speak of him, when necessity demanded it, as she could speak of any other writer in whose work she was interested.

However, her secret was known. It was known to Jessie and to Mrs. Flanders as well as if she had confessed it. Even Mr. Flanders, who pretended not to notice anything, had read the tell-tale changes that swept across her face that morning. He had a particular reason for noticing and for remembering this incident. Dr. Bolton need not worry himself, he thought, so far as Helen's heart was concerned. The loss of Henry Bolton would not trouble her now. But who was this Powers? What kind of a man was he? He would enter upon a quiet investigation, just to satisfy himself. If there were any reasons for doing so he would inform Dr. Bolton. But he remembered what the doctor had told him regarding Helen's good sense and sound discretion. This remembrance quieted all apprehension for the time being.

Mrs. Flanders was perfectly content to allow Helen St. Vincent all the freedom she desired, but she could not help feeling at times that Helen took too many risks. She would not think of granting Jessie such liberties, and Jessie, to do her justice, would not think of taking them. So far as gentleness of demeanor, refinement of manner, and natural dignity were concerned, she had to admit that Helen, though younger, had the decided advantage of

Jessie. Jessie was slangy at times, Helen never. Jessie talked of young men with shocking freedom, now and then; Helen was never guilty of such offenses. Jessie gushed over her latest conquest; Helen never gushed over anything. Jessie would say outlandish things to gentlemen friends and use outlandish English in saying them; Helen was never betrayed into an expression that the most exacting disciple of good taste, male or female, would have her recall.

Yet Helen found pleasure in the society of men and women who were not recognized socially south of Sixteenth street. Jessie would not think of going where Helen went, not that she was, or pretended to be, better than Helen, but because Helen's friends could by no possibility be her friends. And yet Helen could outshine Jessie and did outshine her and hundreds of her friends in the very set where Jessie was most at home.

There was a genuine regard in Jessie's heart for the talented and beautiful girl who could be so "queer," as she expressed it, and yet so very nice. And Helen was fond of Jessie. Not the slightest difference had ever come between them. There was no excuse for either envy or jealousy on Jessie's part, for Helen made it a point to retire in her friend's favor, even to clear the way for her, whenever they met together in society.

Entering the house on the night of the reception, Helen had gone directly to her room. Mrs. Arnold was about to follow, when the colored servant, who had admitted them, touched her lightly on the shoulder.

Turning, she saw that the young man wished to detain her, for some reason, and she read in his face, also, that he wished to avoid attracting the attention of Miss St. Vincent.

Allowing Helen to gain the landing, the colored man whispered :

“There’s a gentleman in the parlor who says he wants to see Miss St. Vincent. He has been here two hours. He would not give me his card. I told him it would be very late when Miss Helen returned, but he insisted on waiting. I couldn’t do anything to prevent him, Mrs. Arnold, without raising a disturbance, so I thought it best to wait until you came home. The folks are all out. Shall I tell him Miss Helen can’t be seen?”

“No, Frank,” replied Mrs. Arnold, quietly; “I will tell him.”

She walked toward the folding doors, which the negro hastened to throw open to admit her.

“Close them,” she said, as she entered the parlor, and Frank did as he was directed.

A young man arose from a reclining position as she advanced toward the center of the room and hastened to meet her, extending his hand.

She checked the exclamation that was on her lips. She had come upon the unexpected, but she was a woman who could command herself.

“Mr. Bolton,” she said, firmly, paying no attention to his extended hand, “I am astonished to find you here.”

“You looked surprised when you saw me” said the young man, but his hand dropped to his side.

“I was not surprised at seeing you, for from what the servant said, I knew you were the person waiting, but—

“Oh, yes, I see,” he interrupted, “you took me for a fellow named Powers. I have been mistaken for Powers since I arrived in Chicago. I understand he is a particular friend of Helen’s—indeed, I understood that before I left—before I left Boston.”

“May I inquire how long you have been in Chicago?”

“I arrived here this afternoon.”

“You came direct from Boston, then?”

“Yes, direct. Had you heard of my return from abroad.”

“I heard of your arrival in Boston. You have not been abroad for some time, Mr. Bolton.”

The young man evidently liked neither the tone nor substance of this reply. His face flushed. Controlling himself, he assumed an air of superiority, and said :

“It is not necessary for me to remark, Mrs. Arnold, that much as I am gratified for the honor of meeting you, my object in coming here was to see Helen—Miss St. Vincent!”

“I have no doubt regarding your object, Mr. Bolton,” replied Mrs. Arnold, and with a dignity that rather spoiled the effect of the young man’s sarcastic speech, “but I will be very plain with you—you cannot see Miss St. Vincent. You must not remain here. You must go?”

The young man’s tone was mollifying ;

“Why do you speak to me in this manner, Mrs. Arnold? I don’t understand you!”

“You do understand me, and you must go, I say!”

The negro, who suspected that everything was not right, lingered about the folding door.

The young man now changed his attitude and his expression. He bit his lower lip. The hand that had been extended to Mrs. Arnold a moment before was now in the pocket of a light spring overcoat. When he spoke again there was a wicked light in his eye, and a nervous tremor in his voice :

“You are insolent, madam! Tell Helen I want to see her!”

“I will carry no message from a scamp and a thief to Helen St. Vincent,” she said, approaching Bolton, and, taking him by the arm, “Leave this house at once or I will have you arrested!”

A powerful blow sent the woman reeling across the room. She fell heavily. There was something in the hand of the ruffian when he struck her that reflected back the dim light of the chandelier.

The colored man had him by the throat in an instant. Bolton’s hand was raised again, and again the reflected light shot across the room, and the negro was lying senseless on the floor.

Bolton was on the stairs and half way up. A key fumbled in the lock of the outer door. He paused and listened. In another moment the door was thrown open, and Mr. Flanders entered, holding the door ajar for his wife and daughter.

Bolton was irresolute. Suddenly, in white, her golden hair falling over her shoulders, one hand clutching her night dress about her bosom, Helen St. Vincent appeared at the head of the stairs.

Father, mother and daughter, moved by one impulse, looked up and beheld the apparition. Then they saw the man on the stairs, midway between them and Helen, for the first time.

Quick as thought Mr. Flanders had drawn a revolver and had pointed it at the intruder. Mrs. Flanders and Jessie, amazed, terrified and unable to move or to utter a syllable, stood behind the husband and father. Bolton’s back was toward Helen, but as he saw his danger he turned his head slightly, so that the dim light from the hall lamp struck his face.

“Don’t shoot! Oh, don’t shoot him!” Helen almost screamed.

“What is this man doing here—who is he?” demanded Mr. Flanders, keeping the muzzle of the revolver well in line with Bolton’s head.

“Who is he? I ask,” repeated Mr. Flanders.

“Oh, Edmund, what brought you here? Why don’t you explain?” cried Helen.

The young man descended the stairs slowly, his eyes fixed on Mr. Flanders. Perfectly composed, but assuming an air of embarrassment, he said:

“This is unfortunate—for Miss St. Vincent and myself. I was just about to leave. I will make any and every reparation possible. My name is Edmund Powers!”

Mr. Flanders let his arm fall. He was astonished and dumbfounded. The young man passed out and closed the door behind him!

CHAPTER VI.

There has never been a time in the history of the St. Vincent family, so far as I have been able to discover, and I have examined its records carefully, when it has been necessary for any of its members, of the male line at least, to feel anxiety with regard to money matters. Going clear back to the revocation of the edict of Nantes, when Vincent St. Vincent, abandoning the ancient chateau and estates of his fathers for conscience sake, became the leader of a little company of panic-stricken Huguenots, who felt that their beloved France had neither happiness nor peace to offer them, and coming down by easy stages to the little hamlet of Gurtheen, on the banks of the Blackwater, in one of the most picturesque and romantic valleys of the south of Ireland—or following, near the middle of the last century, the branch of the house in the history of which we are interested until it is transplanted and firmly rooted on this side of the Atlantic—the name of St. Vincent has always been associated with wealth, dignity, and honor.

The Huguenots had been preparing through a decade for the inevitable emigration. When the time came for flight they were ready to encounter the obstacles which they were wise enough to anticipate would meet them in foreign lands. They carried away with them from France not only the industries and arts which had marked them as a peculiar people for several generations, but the capital they had been accumulating for the expected

emergency. They were welcomed in Germany, in Holland, in Switzerland, but they were received with open arms in Great Britain. They asked for nothing but liberty to worship God in their own way, and freedom to follow their pursuits in peace.

Among those who landed in England were many representatives of the ancient French nobility, who had neither the desire nor the occasion to engage in manufacture or commerce, and whose greatest anxiety was to find estates suitable to their wealth and social station. Of this class was Vincent St. Vincent.

He had traveled throughout England and Scotland, vainly endeavoring to find a home for his mother, his sister Helene and himself. The estates which he would have purchased gladly were not for sale; those which he could have purchased easily were not what he wanted. A large number of Huguenots had in the meantime settled in the south of Ireland, and established various industries there. Partly as a matter of curiosity and partly as a matter of duty, St. Vincent determined to visit these colonies. He had not been in Ireland long before he found near the hamlet of Gurtheen, the manor and demesne which struck his fancy. The estate adjoined the magnificent seat of the Powers, one of the noblest and proudest of the old Irish houses, and had passed out of the hands of a member of that family, who had been too active on the wrong side during the period of Cromwellian invasion and confiscation. In a few years French taste and French art had developed and refined the natural beauty of the place, and it became one of the most charming spots in the marvelously lovely valley of the Blackwater.

In France, St. Vincent had belonged to the obnoxious religious minority. Persecuted beyond endurance, he had

become a fanatic, and all the hatred born of religious prejudice burned in his breast. In Ireland he found the conditions changed, the situation reversed. Protestants were in the minority here, also, it is true, but protestantism was in control. Catholics were undergoing the same species of torture that had been the lot of the Huguenots in France. At first he thought he discovered the hand of providence in this. He was glad to behold the persecution of the persecutor. He thanked God that the faith which held undisputed and tyrannical sway in France, and which had driven him and thousands of his co-religionists into exile, was being subjected in Ireland to all the evils that follow in the wake of intolerance. The same systematic annoyance and persecution which the Catholics around him were suffering had been heaped upon those who were near and dear to him in his native land from his earliest recollection.

It was well! In France the sword and torch had been employed to crush out opposition to Rome. In Ireland the ruins of churches and monasteries told another story and told it eloquently. In France the Huguenot preacher, disguised as a beggar or a cripple, crawled around among his people in the night, or sought shelter in the woods or in the fields in the day, to escape the dungeon or the knife. In Ireland the ragged and almost famished priest was hunted from dreary moor to mountain fastness with the dreadful twin specters of the period—the stocks and the gibbet—ever in his sight.

I do not pretend to say by what course of reasoning or train of thought the bitter Calvinist, St. Vincent, arrived at the conviction that persecution in France or Ireland, in the name and for the glory of God, was an insult to the Almighty, who according to the Christian belief, had sent



"THERE ARE SPOTTERS AT THE EXITS—BE CAREFUL!"



His Son as a messenger of peace and love to humanity. I only know that he began to view the excesses committed in the name of religion with disgust, and that he ended by viewing them with horror.

His religious views must have become broader and kindlier, at any rate, for less than three years after his arrival in Ireland he raised no objection when Edmund Powers, the only son of his Catholic neighbor, asked for the hand of his sister Helene in marriage. And if any prejudices remained they must have been greatly softened as time went on, for two years more had scarcely elapsed before he became the husband of Edmund's sister, Agnes.

Sons and daughters and grandsons and grand-daughters followed these alliances in their natural order. Marriages and intermarriages occurred. The blood of the St. Vincents and the blood of the Powerses became thoroughly mixed. Branches from the original stock have extended over generations of Powerses and St. Vincents in two continents. But the estates of Ireland have passed uninterruptedly from fathers to eldest sons and the Powerses and St. Vincents of Gurtheen are neighbors to this day. There is no other than a social alliance between these two old families now.

Strange to say, however, the name of Helene, anglicised into Helen, and the name of Edmund have been perpetuated through all these years. There has never been a generation of the St. Vincent's in which a daughter has not borne the name of Helen; never a generation of Powerses in which a son has not borne the name of Edmund. And since 1747, when Henry Francis St. Vincent, a great grandson of the original Huguenot emigrant, landed in Virginia with his young wife and baby,

there has never been a time when the direct line of the American branch has not had a Helen St. Vincent in the family.

The things I am talking about now and many of the things I shall be compelled to talk about in the future, to complete this history, were entirely hidden from me in the late summer and through the fall of 1893. The events following Miss St. Vincent's astounding request at the fair—a series of strange occurrences and startling coincidences—convinced Helen and myself that something more than chance had brought us together, and something greater than chance was shaping our destinies.

After Helen's dis—after Christmas, 1893, I spent many months at home and abroad in an effort to trace the histories of the St. Vincent and Powers families, with a view to making some things clear that had puzzled Helen and mystified me.

Helen had told me, as you shall learn, a great deal—all she knew—of her family and its antecedents, and had urged this investigation upon me for other reasons, not necessary to mention here. I entered upon it to please her. It was the least I could do then.

My wound, they tell me, is healing, but I am no better. Yesterday, while I slept, a kind lady, passing through the ward, left a bunch of flowers on the stand near my cot. The nurse, a sweet young girl named Miss Wilson, tells me she was one of those good angels from the Flower Mission. What a beautiful work this is for women! Do they know—can they know?—how much sunshine they bring with them and leave behind them?

Now and then an inquiry regarding my condition comes over the telephone, but nobody calls to see me, nobody but—well, maybe I will see him some day. It is

hard for me to believe that he is not my friend—we loved each other so much!

Helen had told me a great deal—but the things she told me had only served to deepen my perplexities.

It is singular that the newspaper worker, who comes across so many things stranger than fiction in the course of a year, should be cynical when a plain fact stares him in the face! Helen had told me nothing—I had learned nothing—stranger than the things I had been compelled to deal with and handle as a matter of course a hundred times before. I could believe these strange things when they concerned others. When they concerned Helen and myself I doubted them.

Ample means had been placed at my disposal for the prosecution of the inquiry. Helen had cared for that. Messrs. Thorn, Holbrook & Clements, one of the most responsible law firms in Chicago, had provided for my use letters of introduction and credit. I visited Paris, London and the south of Ireland, Virginia, New York and Massachusetts. Some of the results of my investigation I have given you in the last few pages. Some others you shall learn in due time.

On a raw March afternoon in 1894, I found myself seated in the reception hall of the handsome residence of Dr. William Bolton, on the Back Bay, Boston, not more than a stone's throw from Trinity Church, where two years before I had listened to one of the most eloquent sermons that had ever been preached by Phillips Brooks.

Dr. Bolton was at home, but engaged, I was informed; if I could wait a few minutes he would see me; would I be kind enough to send in my card?

Yes, and I handed the attendant an engraved visiting card bearing the name, "Mr. Robert Mason." Before he had time to reach the door leading to what I presumed to be the doctor's consulting parlor, I called him back, took the card and wrote upon the lower left-hand corner, "San Francisco." Then I took a seat near one of the two windows, which looked out upon a perfectly paved avenue.

I think you will agree with me, and especially so if you are of a nervous temperament, that next to the waiting-room of a country railway station there is no place on this earth that wearies the soul and tortures the mind like the antechamber of a physician's consulting-room.

If it should happen to be the antechamber of a Boston physician's consulting-room, there is the inevitable portrait of Daniel Webster, as it was utterly impossible for him to have appeared when he delivered his memorable reply to the great South Carolinian, Robert Hayne. And on the other side of the mantelpiece is Horace Mann, with an agonized expression which suggests to you, at first sight, that he has just had a tooth pulled, or has failed in a medical examination for a life insurance policy—and knows he cannot last long.

George Washington and Martha are hung—literally hung—between these celebrities, and are staring with dull, leaden eyes at a diploma on the opposite wall, granted away back in the '50s to William Bolton, of Lynn, Mass.

On a table in the center of the room is a number of the *Atlantic Monthly*, just five months old, a well-thumbed copy of "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," and reports of the proceedings of various medical societies.

I turn from the room to the street. Carriages containing male and female occupants, securely bundled up for protection against the cold east wind, are flying past from

the city. The chilling and penetrating effect of this east wind I was able to estimate during my ride from the Tremont House to the Back Bay residence district in a handsome cab.

As the minutes pass the wind increases in violence, and it is now blowing a gale across the common and public gardens, and whistling patriotic airs through the keyholes of the stately mansions that line Commonwealth avenue.

The clock at the end of the room—there is always a clock in a doctor's ante-room to show you just how slow the time passes—ticks louder, I believe, than any clock of its size I have ever heard. Now that its ticking has attracted my attention I cannot get rid of it. It seems to have some functional trouble, besides, for its ticks are very irregular, or, at least, they appear to be. Sometimes it ticks loud and fast and sometimes soft and slow.

The number of carriages rolling along the avenue increases. It is not yet 4 o'clock. Financial and commercial Boston is coming home to dinner earlier than usual this afternoon on account, perhaps, of the threatening weather.

There are but few pedestrians—only a very few—this blustering afternoon, and they are mostly men and women who have a theory—I remember reading about it in the morning papers—that carriage riding affects the liver.

I take note of the cold, uninviting severity of the mansions across the street. They are all pretty much alike, all about the same height and the same style, with granite fronts, gray and somber, and granite steps. All have heavy oak doors; all have heavy-framed windows. There is an air of desertion about them. It strikes me that the people who inhabit them must occupy the rear

portions, for there is no evidence of life in front. There are no bright little faces at the windows, and no marks left by dirty little hands on the window panes.

It occurs to me now that I have not seen a childish face or heard a childish voice since I arrived in this highly respectable Back Bay region. I begin to wonder if the people out this way, the sons and daughters of the Puritan fathers and Cape Cod fishermen, were not born grown-up people, with sunken cheeks, pink noses, gold spectacles, bank accounts and advanced views on the Ultimate.

But while I am thinking of the Bostonese, past, present and prospective, the east wind changes its tune, and hums a mezzo-soprano air through the revolving ventilator in the glass above my head. The revolving ventilator is a trifle rusty about its pivot and squeaks. This disgusts the cultivated east wind, and it strikes a minor chord through the venetian blinds at the next window, and goes off to play among the paleontological collection in the Museum of Natural History hard by.

Suddenly the clock stops! No, it doesn't! It has an impediment in its tick, and is simply stuttering.

Then I begin to realize for the first time that I am becoming nervous. When I entered the doctor's residence I believed myself fully prepared for the interview now so close at hand. The long wait in this dreary room has deprived me of my courage, or, which is the same thing, of my self-confidence.

I leave the window with the intention of rushing from the house and jumping into the cab. But I am undecided. I go back to the window again. I look at the clock. Twenty minutes have not elapsed since I first entered the room!

I make up my mind to leave a card on the table saying I would call again—urgent business, etc., etc., compelled me to leave. I take a card from my vest pocket and reach for the pen. It is broken. I search for the lead pencil I had used a few minutes before and cannot find it.

I am sitting with my back to the door of the doctor's consultation-room. It opens. I turn in my chair to rise and meet the person entering. My heart thumps wildly for a moment, it ceases to beat, and I drop back into the chair.

“What do you mean by this, sir?”

The face of the white-haired old man who addresses me is livid. He still holds the knob of the door in his right hand.

“What do you mean by this, sir?” he repeats.

I rise again and look him squarely in the face.

An immediate change comes over his countenance, and he advances and takes me by the hand.

“I beg a thousand pardons!” he says. “It was a foolish and an unfortunate mistake. Please come with me.”

Then, catching me by the wrist, he leads me into the consultation-room. After seating me he goes to a case at the farther end of the chamber, pours something into a graduate, adds a little water out of a pitcher, and, handing me the mixture, says:

“You are agitated. Drink this—it will do you good.”

The old man takes a chair and sits facing me. He scans my features closely, but not unkindly. There is anxiety, mingled with relief, in his expression.

“I fell into a very strange error just now,” he says, as I set the empty graduate on the table, “and I am at a loss to know how to account for it. I believed you to be another person—a person who has in the past caused me

a great deal of anxiety and sorrow. Believing this and remembering the name on your card, I felt for the moment that I was being trifled with. Now, while there is something about you—I couldn't say what—that reminds me of this person, there is really no great resemblance of feature. In fact, I cannot understand, as I have said, how I came to make such a foolish blunder. Will you forgive me! I am very sorry for addressing you so harshly, even by mistake. You must have thought me mad."

"I have not been feeling quite well," I reply, "and your words gave me a slight shock, but it is all over now. I called to consult you about my health, which, you know, must be in a very poor condition when a mere trifle like this can upset me."

"You have overtaxed yourself in some way," he says kindly, "and you need repose. Perhaps you have been working too hard—sticking too close to business."

I admit that hard work has had something to do with it, but that anxiety resulting from causes I could not explain is really at the bottom of my trouble.

He inquires closely into my case and seems to be deeply interested. Very delicately and very skillfully he brings out one point after another, and before I am aware of it I have answered:

"Yes—I confess it is something of that kind—I have met with a great disappointment."

"It is just as well to be plain," he says, "for then we shall know what we are doing. Neither man nor woman should suffer in silence. Nature revolts against it. We all need some one in whom to confide our sorrows, as we must have somebody to share our joys. If you have a good friend tell him—or, better still, tell her—your secrets.

Tell them even at the risk of betrayal. Don't try to carry them around locked up in your own breast. They will kill you."

The old man rises and walks to the end of the room.

"You require a tonic," he continues; "plenty of outdoor exercise, tepid baths and good rubbings. I would advise you to suspend all mental labor for the present. What you most need, however, is amusement—something that will divert your thoughts. Avoid introspection above everything else. The less you think about yourself and the more you think about others, the better."

He hands me a prescription. I am about to leave, but he detains me, as I hoped and even expected he would.

"You must think it rather strange," he says, "that I should have been so entirely deceived when I entered the ante-room. I will ask you to do me a favor."

I tell him it will afford me pleasure to grant it, if within my power.

"As I expect you to call again, I would like to have you meet my wife. It is possible you may call in my absence, some time, and meet her accidentally, or that she may see you entering or leaving the house. We don't want any more mistakes," he adds, pleasantly, "and I am a little curious to learn whether I had any good cause for falling into that error."

I readily consent to the meeting, all the more readily because I want to think, and Dr. Bolton, assuring me that he will return presently, leaves the room.

I have struggled through this interview to regain possession of my faculties, and I have succeeded. Fortunately, the old gentleman has attributed the cause of the shock which I received to his mistake. I have no desire to undeceive him.

I had come to this house expecting some such an outbreak on his part. If it had not happened I would have been greatly disappointed. But I was not prepared to meet—myself!—myself as I know I shall appear some day if I ever leave this cot and live to be 60 years of age—myself, gray-haired, stoop-shouldered, wrinkled! I saw myself, as I turned my face toward the door opening behind me, livid with rage, trembling with indignation, and demanding of my other and younger self—

“What do you mean by this, sir?”

And no wonder that this good old man—this noble old man—was livid and trembling at that moment. Helen St. Vincent’s uncle, her mother’s brother—the uncle who had brought her to his home a motherless infant, who had been more than a tender father to her in her childhood, who had watched with jealous love and solicitude over her girlhood, who almost adored her in her young womanhood—this old man had mistaken me for his son, Henry Bolton!

I hear footsteps descending the stairs. I hear them in the hall. They pause. There is a hand on the door-knob; it turns; it springs back again. I hear low voices.

Again the knob turns and the door is pushed ajar.

Dr. Bolton advances with his wife on his arm. I see her agitation and I hasten to re-assure her.

“I am glad to meet you, Mrs. Bolton.”

The sound of my voice seems to satisfy her, but she is very pale and does not speak. The doctor says:

“This is Mr. Mason, my dear, now calm yourself.”

CHAPTER VII.

It is always difficult, often impossible for us poor mortals to determine just how, when or where our great troubles began. We know them when they arrive—know them too well. They come like expected guests, prepared to stay, but so sudden and so overwhelming is their coming sometimes that we lose the ability, if we have the disposition, to trace them to their source.

I was going to say that Helen St. Vincent's troubles dated from the night of Bolton's visit to the Flanders mansion, and, so far as she had any knowledge of them, the statement would have been true. But in reality they began long ago—they had been preparing and accumulating for her during the past three years in many places and in many ways. Helen, however, had never known up to this time what tribulation meant.

She had returned home very happy that night. She did not know ; she could not tell why she felt happier than usual. She was content to accept her happiness without inquiring very far into its cause and without debating in her mind how long it it would last. Helen was full of youth, full of health and full of hope. She was nearly always happy—even the unhappiness she experienced since a memorable evening at the fair was not unmixed with pleasure.

She wondered why Mrs. Arnold had not followed her up stairs, as usual. While undressing she had detected the murmur of low voices in the parlors below. This

was strange, as she was quite certain the family had not returned. Had Jessie returned, that impetuous creature would have burst into Helen's room without delay or ceremony, for Jessie always had something she was "just dying" to tell her friend.

Helen could now distinguish two voices—the voice of a man and the voice of a woman. The man's voice rose to a higher pitch, and she could hear the woman's voice take on an angry tone. It was the voice of Mrs. Arnold. Scarcely had the woman's voice ceased before there was the dull sound of a fall—the parlor doors were opened suddenly and flung back with a jar that shook the house; there was a scuffle; there were footsteps in the hall—on the stairs!

Helen was thoroughly alarmed. She had opened her door. She heard a key turn in the lock of the outer door. Then, without knowing what she was doing, she ran to the head of the stairway.

We know what followed. It was all over in a few seconds; but a whole history was crowded into that brief interval.

Though the scoundrel Bolton—the man she had mistaken for me—spoke scarcely above a whisper, Helen had caught every syllable he uttered, and every word had pierced her heart.

The thought had come into her mind as she saw him—me—on the stairway that I was insane. Insanity alone could explain my presence there at such a time. Before this charitable thought had become a conviction she heard the villainous remarks made near the door—and understood their full meaning.

No insane man could have grasped such an opportunity to secure his liberty or to save his life. The mind of an

accomplished ruffian alone could have conceived and executed so vile a plan of escape with such rapidity.

Whatever impulse had driven Powers to seek her in such a manner and at such a time, he had attempted to shield himself—he had actually shielded himself—at the expense of her honor!

Helen stood on the stairway, like one transfixed. She could say nothing; nothing to set herself right; nothing to undo what this fiend had done.

Had she not often spoken of him to the three persons who were now looking up at her from the hallway beneath as the very soul of honor! So much the worse for her.

She was stunned, bewildered, and had taken a step or two down the stairs.

“Young woman—go to your room!”

It was Mr. Flanders who spoke. His voice was cold, harsh—without feeling, without sympathy.

The first shock had stupified her. This, the second shock, aroused her.

She was in her room, and she would have fallen to the floor unconsciously had not her native pride and her native intellect saved her.

She was dressing and thinking; thinking and dressing.

There were voices below. Mr. Flanders was speaking—speaking harshly. Jessie was speaking—speaking indignantly. Her young friend was coming up the stairs. Jessie was at the door. She passed on, came back, passed on again.

There was a stifled scream below. There were hurrying footsteps. There was a ringing of the telephone bell. Jessie again passed Helen's door and ran down the stairs.

But Helen was dressing and thinking. She could not imagine anything likely to happen that might be worse than that which had already happened. Mr. Flanders will pursue Powers, she thought. He had already begun the pursuit. That's what the telephone bell means. He will never rest until he has punished the villain who has insulted his family and brought disgrace upon his home. He believes Powers. He is quick to believe ill of a woman. He has exhibited the coarse and unfeeling side of his nature more than once. He is a good man outwardly—a model citizen, an upright, Christian gentleman. Inwardly he is a moral coward. How these thoughts shot through Helen's brain that night; within those few minutes!

A thousand conflicting emotions filled her bosom. Was she not doing Mr. Flanders an injustice! Could it be possible that she was doing Mr. Powers an injustice? How was she to explain his conduct—to reconcile it with her past knowledge of him? Had he not always treated her with the greatest respect, with the greatest delicacy? And yet the horrible fact remained! She could have forgiven everything—more than she dared to confess—but his treachery, his cowardice!

And Mr. Flanders? He had been unmasked in a second. He, too, was a coward! Why had he allowed Powers to pass? Why had he not kil——!

There was French blood in her veins and she felt it throbbing in her heart. There was Irish blood in her veins and she felt it throbbing in her brain. The blood of the old French Calvinists that had never become sluggish under tyranny, mixed with the blood of the old Irish Romanists that had never cooled under persecution, was rushing to her face, ringing in her

ears, crying out, as it had never ceased to cry out through all the generations of St. Vincents and Powers, for truth and justice!

But where was Mrs. Arnold? Strange that she had not thought of her old nurse before. Now she remembered all—the voices below, the angry voice of Mrs. Arnold, the fall.

She was dressed—dressed with care. She could never remember how she had accomplished it that night, nor why she had taken so much pains, but she was dressed as skillfully and as tastefully as she had ever been in her life when she started to descend the stairs.

Before she had taken half a dozen steps Mr. Flanders had admitted three men; two in police uniform and one in plain clothing. Through the open door she could hear horses tramping on the pavement outside and a gruff voice trying to quiet them.

The three men followed Mr. Flanders into the parlor. Helen descended and passed in behind them.

The colored servant, his head bandaged, sat directly opposite the folding doors. Mrs. Flanders was kneeling beside Mrs. Arnold, who was lying on the floor, her head supported upon a couple of pillows. There was a white bandage around her forehead. A servant was just retiring through connecting doors with a basin between her hands. Jessie stood pale and agitated beside her mother. Helen took all this in at a single glance. She hastened to the side of her chaperon, removed the bandage, whispered something to Jessie, who left the parlor, examined the wound, and on the return of her cousin and a servant redressed it skillfully. In the meantime she had placed her ear to Mrs. Arnold's heart had felt her pulse, and had applied some restoratives. She was for the

moment the perfect trained nurse—cool in her every movement, and betraying the education she had received at the hands of the eminent surgeon, her uncle, Dr. Bolton.

“She will be better presently—it is only a severe shock,” she said to Mrs. Flanders.

Then she listened to the colored servant, who was telling all he knew, in answer to questions put to him by the man in plain clothing, who was called Mr. Jennings.

The latter, after the colored man had given his testimony, addressing Mr. Flanders, said :

“The person who committed these assaults must be known to some one in your house, sir. He asked to see a Miss St. Vincent, I believe. Who is Miss St. Vincent ?”

Mr. Flanders was silent.

“I am Miss St. Vincent,” said Helen, quietly, approaching the group.

“Then,” said Jennings, closely scanning her, “you know the man?”

“I do!”

“Will you give me his name?”

“No!”

“But I must have it. It is my duty, you know.”

“Who sent for you?”

“Mr. Flanders.”

“Then Mr. Flanders, I hope, will send you about your business.”

“Pardon me, young lady, but I am about my business.”

“Mr. Flanders,” said Helen, “I would much prefer that this matter be dropped here.”

“Miss St. Vincent,” replied Mr. Flanders, coldly, “will you permit me to decide what is best in this matter? I think it would be far more becoming to answer the gentleman’s question.”

“I shall not answer it.”

“Then I shall.”

“You shall not, Mr. Flanders! I beg of you not to do so!”

“Do you mean to let this—this scoundrel go unpunished!”

“No—he shall not go unpunished!”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that he shall be punished—he shall be punished by one who has a right to punish him!”

“May I ask,” inquired Mr. Flanders, with a sneer, “who this person—this man is, who has a right to punish him?”

“My uncle’s son—Henry Bolton!”

Mr. Flanders looked at the girl with an expression of utter amazement. She could speak of her affianced husband under such circumstances! Then he remembered what Dr. Bolton had written him about this self-same son.

“Helen, you are talking nonsense, girl! In view of what has happened here to-night—in view of the position you have placed yourself in——”

“Don’t say another word, Mr. Flanders,” she broke in. “Don’t you dare to say another word?” Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes were flashing. “You have allowed me to be insulted in your house without raising a finger against the man who insulted me! Don’t you dare insult me yourself. If you are the friend my uncle supposed you to be, the least you can do now is to send these men away!”

There was a movement behind her as she spoke. Mrs. Arnold was sitting up, supported by Mrs. Flanders.

Jennings rushed to the side of the chaperon, who was just recovering consciousness.

“The man who struck you—who was he?” inquired the detective, with eagerness.

"Tell him nothing! Tell him nothing, aunty," commanded Helen, before Mrs. Arnold had time to reply.

The chaperon looked at her charge in astonishment, and, without uttering a word, sank back on the pillows.

"This is very strange," remarked Jennings, going back to Mr. Flanders, "but, of course, you can give me the name?"

"I want to say to you, Mr. Flanders," interrupted Helen, with a something in her eyes he could never forget, and a bitterness in her tone he could never forgive, "that when you allowed the man whose name you are asked to give to pass safely out of your house to-night you forfeited every right you may have had to interfere in my affairs. You shall be held accountable by my uncle—by my uncle, Mr. Flanders!—for whatever you may do or say from this time on in any matter that concerns me!"

The business man of unquestionable integrity had never been addressed in this manner by a woman before. To be thus addressed in the presence of his wife and daughter, in the presence of his friend, Detective Jennings, who had done him many a good service, and in the presence of the two stalwart policemen, who admired the pluck of the beautiful girl, was simply outrageous. It was so outrageous that he beckoned Jennings to follow him. The policemen followed Jennings. The parlor doors were closed behind them. After a minute or so the front door was opened and closed. Presently Helen heard the tramping of horses' feet and the rumbling of a wagon.

Mr. Flanders, having summoned some of the servants, Mrs. Arnold was removed to Helen's room, at that young lady's request.

For the rest of the night Helen watched over her old nurse, who had been more stunned than injured by the blow, evidently inflicted by a blunt instrument, probably the butt of a revolver. And Helen recalled that Mr. Powers had once informed her that in all his travels he had never carried a weapon of any kind, and that he was particularly opposed to the practice of carrying pistols!

Mrs. Arnold recovered rapidly under the tender and skillful care of Helen, who had assisted her uncle too often in surgical operations to be easily frightened. She knew just what to do and how to do it, and she would not listen to a suggestion from Mrs. Flanders that a doctor be summoned.

Jessie went to Helen's room that night and kissed her. The girls did not speak. They simply looked into each other's eyes, and the eyes they looked into were wet with tears, but full of love and confidence.

The next morning Helen received a coldly polite note from Mrs. Flanders. She and Jessie would not be at home for several days. The house was at Helen's disposal, and the servants had orders to obey her in everything, etc.

This note was written in accordance with the imperative orders of Mr. Flanders. His wife and daughter, if permitted to follow their own impulses, would have taken an altogether different course. They desired to visit Helen, to assist her in caring for Mrs. Arnold, to exhibit their sympathy for the young lady.

Jessie had formed a conclusion long ago—from the very beginning. There was not a shadow of doubt in her mind with respect to Helen. She believed her father had condemned her dear young friend altogether too precipitately.

She was determined that Helen should know that there was at least one in the Flanders family who had perfect faith in her.

That morning she had indignantly resented an insinuation dropped by her father—so indignantly that the latter thought it the wiser plan to keep his opinion of Helen's conduct to himself thereafter in his daughter's presence.

But he gave positive orders that all intercourse with Helen should cease. Neither wife nor daughter must visit her. As soon as Mrs. Arnold was well enough to travel, she and her charge must return to Boston. They must leave the Flanders mansion, at any rate.

But Mr. Flanders was not altogether easy in his mind, nevertheless.

“There are a great many things I don't understand,” he said to his wife, the next morning. “I made several inquiries about Powers when I found how deeply interested Helen was in him. I learned that he was a well-bred, talented, hard-working fellow, generally popular in his class, and supposed to be on the high road to success in his profession. Now, I can't understand how a young man of that stamp—unless he were drunk or insane—could be guilty of such conduct. We know that he was not drunk last night—we know that he was sane—too sane for me. Helen is right about one thing—I ought to have knocked him down. But Helen's indignation arises from the fact that he betrayed—oh, well, let us say no more about it, then.”

“If Helen were not innocent she would not be so indignant over his escape.”

“Now, that's the very point. She is indignant, or pretends to be, over his escape, but she is now trying to shield him.”

“She is not; she is trying to shield herself. Nothing can be said or done about this matter now that will not reflect upon her. She has sense enough to see that any publicity growing out of his arrest or punishment will drag her name into notoriety. It would be disgraceful. It would kill her uncle. It is strange to me that you do not see the delicacy of her position.”

“Well, do as I bid you. Let her understand that we will tolerate no such—no such nonsense in this house.”

Helen had cut him to the quick. She had questioned his conduct as a man. She had all but called him a coward. He hated her and he admired her. He never admired her more than he did when she had commanded him to keep silent—dared him to speak. She looked like a woman then who felt the power of her innocence and dignity, and knew how to wield it. And she was such a beautiful creature! But was she not simply a consummate actress? In spite of her threat regarding her uncle, he was determined to sift this matter to the bottom. Nothing would give him greater satisfaction than to be able to bring this proud-spirited young woman to his feet. If she begged for mercy he could grant it. But she must be made to feel that he, the responsible, respectable, influential head of the house of William P. Flanders & Co., must be respected—even though he were wrong. And yet, she had the best of him so far—she despised him!

“Heavens!” he muttered, “I should have throttled that scoundrel! But his coolness and his words paralyzed me!”

The more he thought of Helen’s taunting remarks, her flashing eyes, and her bitter words, the more determined he became that she should be humiliated.

He saw the force of his wife's interpretation of Helen's position. Powers could not be dealt with by the police—could not be dealt with publicly at all, without bringing her name into a scandal. And, a more important consideration, he must proceed quietly lest his own family be mixed up in it.

Jessie called upon Helen that afternoon before leaving with her mother for one of the great world's fair hotels, where Mr. Flanders had taken apartments. She entered the room as unceremoniously as ever and proceeded to unload upon Helen a large and varied assortment of news and gossip concerning the world in which she moved. There was no sign of restraint in her manner. She was as frank and affectionate and as gushing as though nothing had happened. The events of the preceding night were not once referred to. Not until the visit was drawing to a close did Jessie exhibit the slightest sign of sympathy, and when she was compelled to give her feelings free play finally, they expressed themselves in a long and affectionate embrace and a torrent of tears. Jessie could only communicate her sentiments in one way—in her own, natural way.

"Helen," she cried, "I don't care, I just don't care! There's an awful mistake somewhere, but I know you are not to blame for anything. I love you Helen—I love you Helen, and I just don't care!"

Then she rushed from the room.

I have said enough about Helen St. Vincent's power of penetration to make it unnecessary to tell you that she understood the entire situation. She knew how Mr. Flanders felt—she read his character clearly. She was not an angel, nor have I attempted to paint her as such. She was a proud-spirited young woman. She felt that

she had been grossly insulted not only by Powers—by me!—but by Mr. Flanders. I have said that she had seen the world, and that she understood it. Most lovable and most amiable of creatures, she longed to be a man for a day—just for one day! This being an impossible thing, she longed to have a man beside her whose duty it would be to set her right.

There was one man who would wade rivers and cross mountains to serve her—one old man who would give his life for her! But why should she make him unhappy! Why should she trouble him? If there was a great sacrifice to be made she would make it herself, rather than bring sorrow down upon his gray hairs. She thought of Henry Bolton—but she had not seen him for so many years! Would he be capable of performing the task she had marked out for her ideal, even if he were here? And, in view of what had happened recently, had she any right to call upon him?

She loved Edmund Powers. She had not told him so in words, but she loved him, and he knew it. That is, she had loved him once—it seemed a long time ago! If some other person had been in Powers' place that night—if Powers were free from the dreadful offense which he had committed against her honor—against decency—how quickly she would fly to him now. He was a man she could trust—he would defend her, protect her, love her! What was she thinking about? Her thoughts became confused. She could not reason logically. She had been so shockingly deceived, so suddenly undeceived, that her faculties would not respond to the change in the conditions which surrounded her.

For three days Helen remained shut up with her old companion. Mrs. Arnold had attempted several times to

refer to the events of the night on which she was attacked by the ruffian Bolton. She assumed that Helen knew it was her cousin who had committed the assault. She had no knowledge whatever of his subsequent villany, and attributed the coolness of the Flanders family as well as the tears and words of Jessie to the fact that Helen's attempt to shield Henry had caused offense. But every attempt she made to bring the matter up was frustrated by Helen, who at length had spoken decisively—

“Please do not refer to it, aunty, and never mention that man's name.”

Mrs. Arnold could not understand Helen always—but she had always trusted her fully and had always found her judgments to be good. She did not understand her now, but believed she knew what was best. So she remained silent regarding Bolton.

On the afternoon of the third day, when both were sitting at the window looking out on the stream of carriages moving rapidly toward the south, Mrs. Arnold said:

“There are a few questions I would like to ask you, dearest.”

“Well,” replied Helen, “you know you have promised not to mention——”

“I never intrude in your affairs Helen, unless I am convinced that I should do so. I never ask questions to satisfy a mere curiosity.”

“Indeed, you do not, aunty, and that is one reason why we have always been such good friends.”

“I only want to learn something now, because I believe the information will help us both to understand some things we ought to understand. I have been thinking a great deal, Helen.”

"Well, aunty, what have you been thinking about?"

"Will you answer my questions?"

"I will, providing——"

"No, you must answer my questions without provisions. If they do not result in any good I will promise you to let the matter drop for all time."

"All right, aunty," replied Helen, smiling and kissing her companion; "let us have the matter over with as quick as possible."

"I want to know, first of all, Helen, if you love anybody—any man I mean?"

"Yes, I love a man. I love my uncle better than I love anybody in this world, aunty."

"Oh, Helen! you know that is not what I mean."

"I really cannot answer your question in any other way, aunty. Do not ask me to." And her eyes filled with tears.

"But I must, Helen. Forgive me, dearest, but I must. Do you love—you know who I mean?"

"Who do you mean, aunty?"

"You have made me promise not to mention his name."

"I did love him, aunty; how could I love him now!"

"Now, Helen, I was entirely mistaken, then, for I thought—I believed you really loved Mr. Powers."

"Aunty!"

"Why, Helen! what is the matter, child?"

The young lady had risen and was looking intently into the eyes of her chaperon. The thought had occurred to her that Mrs. Arnold's mind had been affected by the recent shock.

But beyond showing surprise, almost consternation, because of Helen's unaccountable exclamation, she appeared to be entirely herself.

“I hope I have said nothing to wound you, Helen,” she continued. “I can see no reason why, if you ever loved Mr. Powers you should not love him now.”

“After—after all that has happened, aunty! What can you be thinking about? And you have broken your promise, too. Why do you mention the name of that—that wretch?”

“For heaven’s sake, Helen! What do you mean! Not mention Mr. Powers’ name? Oh, yes! I know! I see it. My dear, dear Helen, you are mistaken; you are mistaken. Oh, why didn’t I think of it before? Whom do you blame for striking me—for striking Frank?”

“I blame him.”

“You blame——”

“Mr. Edmund Powers!”

“My God, Helen! You wrong him! You wrong him, child! It was not Edmund Powers—it was Henry Bolton!”

What could the poor girl think; what could she say? Was her dear old nurse mad? Was she still passing through a dreadful dream? Mrs. Arnold stood before her as one greatly agitated but unable to speak.

There was a double knock at the door. It was repeated before Helen said, mechanically, “Come in,” thinking that one of the servants desired admittance.

Mr. Flanders entered. He was pale and looked worried. Helen stood beside Mrs. Arnold’s chair, resting her right hand upon her companion’s shoulder. Her back was toward the window. She did not speak.

“Helen,” said Mr. Flanders, without any preliminaries, “at my office this morning I found awaiting me a card bearing the name of Mr. Henry Bolton!”

Helen was startled. Mr. Flanders noticed it. Mrs. Arnold attempted to rise, but the pressure of Helen's fingers on her shoulder warned her to remain quiet.

Mr. Flanders held a card between his thumb and forefinger.

"Mr. Bolton had written," he resumed, "upon the back of his card: 'Have just arrived. Am going to the fair to-day. Shall do myself the honor of calling again.' I would ask you, Helen, if you recognize this handwriting?"

He watched her while she examined the card.

"Yes, I recognize it. It is Henry's handwriting."

"You are positive?"

"Positive!"

"There can be no mistake about it?"

"None whatever."

"It chanced by the merest accident," he resumed, "that as the young man who left this card passed out of my office, a gentleman, who happened to be a friend of mine, was entering and recognized him. My friend waited until I arrived. He told me of meeting this young man in the office. I inquired if the person described had left his name. My secretary handed me this card. My friend then informed me that he had met the young man under a different name in New York, where he was known as a blackleg, a blackmailer and a thief."

Mrs. Arnold again attempted to rise and Helen was about to speak, but he asked them to be patient, and continued:

"Your uncle had written me a letter, Helen, which had prepared me for some such intelligence, so that I was not surprised. I felt it my duty to inquire farther into this matter."

“Yes,” assented Helen; “go on please!” She was listening eagerly now, for the postscript to the letter Dr. Bolton had written her was recalled to her mind.

“Frank had driven me to the bank, and I had instructed him to go to the office and await my coming, as I desired to send some money to Mrs. Flanders. He had entered the office and disappeared suddenly, my secretary told me. I immediately telephoned police headquarters, and the detective who was here the other night, the man called Mr. Jennings, you remember, was soon with me. I told him no more than was necessary, and, Frank failing to appear, we took a carriage at the corner. My friend accompanied us. After visiting a number of wretched resorts, we entered one of the vilest dives, a basement, in the business district of the south side. Here Jennings seated us at a table under the sidewalk, a point from which we had a pretty clear view of the entire interior, and asked us to look around. My friend at once called my attention to a young man who was seated with some out-cast women at a dirty beer table, almost directly in line with our position, at the extreme end of the basement. His back was turned to us. He wore a light business suit and a derby hat.”

Helen was trembling. Flanders offered her a chair. She declined it. He went on:

“I whispered some instructions to Jennings and he sauntered leisurely in the direction of the young man. Reaching the table at which he was seated Jennings touched him lightly on the shoulder. The young man turned suddenly and squarely around. Jennings bowed, made some apology for his mistake, I presume, and passed on. But my companion had identified the young man at once.”

“And you?” inquired Helen, her eyes riveted on Mr. Flanders.

“I recognized him, too, Helen.”

Helen had come so close to him that he felt her breath upon his face.

“Yes! yes! Well?”

“As the man who was here the other night!”

“Yes, I know! But his name?”

“Jennings made inquires of the special policeman, the bartender and others. The fellow goes by the name of Ed Powers!”

CHAPTER VIII.

Helen was greatly agitated, but the cause of her agitation was unknown to Mr. Flanders. The coarseness of his nature would not permit him to understand the workings of her delicate organization. He had formed a theory entirely worthy of him. He had trapped her. She was a great deal worse than he had hoped to find her. But he must be careful. He was afraid of her. A little patience, and he would crush her. He would bring her to his own terms. Mr. Flanders awaited patiently the effect of his last words upon the young lady.

Helen recovered herself, and asked, calmly :

“Will you give me the name of the place where you found this man ?”

Mr. Flanders hesitated. What could she be thinking of doing?

“Give me the name of the place !”

It was a command now, not a request.

He named the place.

“And the location, please?”

He gave it.

“Thank you, Mr. Flanders. I know where it is. It is located in one of your own buildings ?”

He looked annoyed, but stammered :

“Yes, I’m sorry to say it is.”

“I am glad you are sorry, Mr. Flanders.”

She spoke calmly and sincerely, but her words irritated him.

“Miss St. Vincent,” he said, more for the purpose of getting rid of this disagreeable phase of the subject than because of any sentimental regard for her, “I hope you will not think of visiting such a place—I hope you will not forget yourself!”

She gave him a momentary glance of indignation, a look of scorn that melted into one of contemptuous pity, and replied:

“Mr. Flanders, I never forget myself.”

He had to confess to himself at that moment, firstly, that he had made a terrible blunder, and, secondly, as she stood facing him, her head thrown back proudly, her face illumined with intelligence, in an attitude of perfect grace, that Helen St. Vincent was a beautiful woman.

When she spoke again there was moisture in her eyes and a tremor in her voice, but she never paused for a word.

“A good woman once told me, sir,” she said, “a woman who had given her life to the study of the question, in the hope of learning something that might be of value to humanity, that thousands of girls and women in this and other countries were driven every year into forgetfulness of their homes, their honor and their God, not by man’s perfidy, for that would presuppose their own weakness or their partial guilt, but, by what, Mr. Flanders, by what?”

Mr. Flanders had never given a thought to the matter. He had no time for the study of problems of this kind.

“I will tell you,” she continued. “This good woman said that those high-spirited and innocent girls and women were driven to shame by the ignorance and brutality of men and women who judged them from appearances

and condemned them without proof! She told me more than this, Mr. Flanders. She said that the parents, natural guardians, the friends, the men and women who should be the last were almost invariably the first to doubt, the earliest to suspect, and the readiest to accuse them. To a woman an accusation is equal to a conviction. Your anxiety lest I should forget those whom you have forgotten—my father, my uncle, my aunt, your sister, who reared me, my name! do you understand, my name!—has reminded me of what this good woman said, and for the first time I fully realize how much truth she spoke.”

“Helen, let us understand each other.”

“There can be no understanding between us, sir. You have insulted me wantonly and repeatedly.”

“But think of the situation! What am I to suppose?”

“What right have you to suppose? What right have you to guess, to assume, even to imagine that I could forget myself under any circumstances? What right have you to think wrong of me? What right have you to inquire into this matter at all? Have I not told you that you forfeited every right you may have had to interfere in my affairs, when you neglected to defend my honor, as my uncle would have defended the honor of your daughter?”

She had stung the respectable merchant again.

“What would you have had me do?” he demanded angrily, hoping that her reply would show him a way out.

“What any man should have done—what my uncle would have done for Jessie under similar circumstances!”

The blood rushed to his face. He lost his temper.



"THERE WERE TWO CRACKS OF A WHIP * * * AND WE WERE OFF."

“Miss St. Vincent,” he exclaimed, “Jessie could by no possibility be placed in the position you occupied that night. I would rather see her dead now than see her standing where you are.”

“So would I,” replied Helen, quietly.

“I have tried to get at the bottom of this matter.” He paused and took on a cold and scornful expression. “I have tried to get at the bottom of this matter,” he continued. “The deeper I go into it the worse it looks for you, Helen. Let me be plain with you, since nothing but plain talk will satisfy you. You have carried things with a high hand thus far, but I cannot be brow-beaten nor blindfolded.”

Helen’s hands were clenched behind her. She did not know—could not conceive what was coming.

“I cannot be brow-beaten nor blindfolded, Miss St. Vincent,” he continued. “You knew it was Bolton and not Powers who stood on the stairs on his way from your room that night! You shielded your rascally cousin and lover at the expense of an innocent man! You were aware of Bolton’s presence in Chicago for some time, and met him frequently, and you deceived us by telling of letters which he had written you from Europe! He took his cue from you when you called him ‘Edmund,’ but turned out to be even a greater ruffian than you could have supposed him to be. His assumption of the name of one who, as far as I can learn, is an honorable man, at your suggestion, would have been all right had he not involved you—like a coward, I admit—in an intimacy which gives you no right, Miss St. Vincent, to take on airs when addressing me. Your Henry Bolton is a gambler, a confidence man, a thief, the associate of lewd women, a—”

“Stop!” exclaimed Mrs. Arnold. “You have said too much already. Miss St. Vincent must not listen to such talk!”

The chaperon had seated Helen and was now standing in her place and talking for her.

“What you say, Mr. Flanders, is not true—not a word of it, sir. Miss St. Vincent has deceived nobody—she has been herself deceived. I was at first mistaken when I saw Bolton in the parlor. His father had written me concerning the young man’s bad conduct, so that I might be on my guard. I was told to expect him in Chicago. This alone prevented me from mistaking him for Mr. Powers. You talk of cowards and ruffians, Mr. Flanders; it is cowardly and ruffianly on your part to assert that Miss St. Vincent could have anything in common with a man of Bolton’s character. You will do me a favor by leaving the room, sir. Helen’s uncle shall know of this.”

“Helen’s uncle shall know of it. You have no right to meddle in this affair, Mrs. Arnold, and I will remember your offensive remarks. I have done too much for you—”

“You would bring up a subject that was to be forever buried—you would talk of Jessie, perhaps.”

“Silence, woman!”

“It is your own fault now if I am not silent. I am afraid that some day Jessie will suffer at your hands, as Helen has suffered. I would rather tear her away—”

“For God’s sake, be silent, woman!”

“Had I known your real character I would never have consented——”

“Will you be quiet?” exclaimed Mr. Flanders. “Woman, this girl has deceived you as she has deceived everybody. Don’t mention her in the same breath with Jessie. If you do, I’ll——”

“Mr. Flanders, make no threats. It will not be best for you. I want you to apologize to Miss St. Vincent.”

“You are a fool,” he exclaimed, excitedly, as he left the room and slammed the door behind him.

Helen had heard but little of what passed between Mr. Flanders and Mrs. Arnold, and had understood nothing. She was staring into vacancy as her companion turned toward her. Here was another and the worst blow of all. Not a single blow, either, but a double one. Her Cousin Henry had turned out to be a ruffian—Henry, with whom she had played in childhood, whose little sweetheart she had been, whose wife she was to be, a gambler, a thief! Could it be possible? And she stood accused of endeavoring to shield him at the expense of Edmund Powers, of willfully using the man she loved to shield the man who had proved himself to be a villain! She gave no thought to herself. She thought of the old man in Boston, of Edmund Powers—of two men deeply, grievously wronged!

She rose as if inspired, took some note paper from a drawer, seated herself at a table, and wrote:

“Meet me at the south entrance to the Woman’s Building at 5 o’clock this evening. I am in great distress. Do not fail. H.”

Then she addressed an envelope, “Mr. Ed Powers,” giving the street and number of the place mentioned by Mr. Flanders.

She descended to the library. Mr. Flanders was there, pacing up and down the room, but she paid no attention to him. She ordered a carriage and a district messenger by telephone.

Returning to her room, she busied herself writing. She gave Mrs. Arnold some instructions, soothed, kissed her, and even smiled.

The messenger arrived, got the letter and departed. It might reach the person it was intended for. Something told her it would. If it failed she had another plan.

The carriage was waiting. Helen kissed Mrs. Arnold again, saying she would return as soon as possible, begged her not to be uneasy and left the room.

As the carriage moved away from the stile-block in front of Mr. Flanders' home another, waiting a little further down the avenue, followed. Helen had no time to lose and had requested the driver to move rapidly.

She was driven northward on Michigan avenue until Jackson street was reached, when the carriage turned west to Dearborn and north on Dearborn to Monroe. Helen got out at the corner and entered one of the great banking houses in the vicinity.

As she disappeared the occupant of the other carriage also got out, and, handing the driver of Helen's vehicle a five dollar bill, said :

" Make some mistake, if necessary, and drive slow, so as to be at the southwest corner of State and Madison streets in just twenty minutes. Look at your watch. If you can't reach there by that time my carriage will wait till you pass the corner. That's my carriage. Is it agreed?"

" It is," said the driver, " I understand."

Mr. Flanders re-entered his carriage and was driven rapidly to the city hall. He passed through the ground floor corridor from Washington street, remained inside about ten minutes and returned, accompanied by Mr. Jennings.

They were ahead of time when they reached State and Madison streets. Mr. Flanders watched every carriage that crossed the busy intersection, but twenty minutes additional slipped by before the right one appeared,

It came east on Madison, crossed State street and continued on toward the lake. The driver of Helen's carriage looked back and saw that the other was following. He evidently had instructions to move rapidly. It was all Mr. Flanders' driver could do to keep him in sight.

Mr. Flanders believed he understood Helen's intentions. He had waylaid the messenger boy, had read the note and knew where the meeting was to occur. Helen would do one of two things—she would either bribe Bolton to disappear, or she would disappear with him. The man had no conception whatever of the girl's character and could not see beyond this. He was determined that she should do neither one nor the other. To justify himself now in the eyes of Dr. Bolton he must prove her to be in league with her cousin, to be cognizant of his rascality, to be—well, he would see!

He did not take Jennings entirely into his confidence. Jennings had his own theory. He had seen the man known as Ed Powers and suspected him as the person who had committed the assault in Mr. Flander's house, He was probably a brother of this Miss St. Vincent—some relative of hers she was anxious to shield. Such cases were not uncommon. He had seen Miss St. Vincent and would remember her if he saw her again. At present all he had to do was to follow the instructions of Mr. Flanders. It paid him to follow the instructions of this gentleman. Whatever might be necessary would be done, but circumstances would shape his course, as he understood it.

The carriage rolled on in the meantime and Eighteenth street was reached. Here a number of vehicles were crossing from the east to the west and a derailed street car helped to block the way. Helen's carriage had

passed through and her driver looking back saw that the other vehicle was temporarily blockaded.

He thought of the beautiful girl he was "hauling" and said to himself, as he applied the whip to his horses:

"I'm damned if I don't!"

And he lashed his horses harder still. Reaching Twenty-second street he turned south and shot through the narrow thoroughfare until he reached Cottage Grove avenue, when he ran his horses up a side street and into an alleyway.

He stopped, dismounted from his seat, and, going to the door of the carriage, addressed Helen:

"Don't be frightened, lady; there's a carriage foller'n us and I've given 'em the slip, that's all."

Helen asked him to explain. He told enough to satisfy her that his suspicions were well founded.

The other carriage reached Twenty-second street and stopped.

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Flanders, leaning out of the window.

"I've lost 'em."

The man of unquestioned integrity used an improper word and jumped out. Jennings followed. There was a hurried consultation.

"The young lady has no time to lose," observed Jennings. "The driver has taken the shortest route. They have turned down Cottage Grove avenue."

This was Mr. Flanders' opinion also. His driver waited for the owner of the carriage to re-enter it, and then drove on.

Helen's driver was on the lookout and did not have long to wait until the Flanders carriage passed. He went to the window again.

"They've passed, miss."

"Very well. Drive on, then, please."

"When must you be at the fair, miss?"

"Before five o'clock."

"Whew!" exclaimed the driver. "I can't do it."

Helen became alarmed.

"You mean you can't drive me there in time?"

"That's what I mean, miss. But I can get you there in time—ahead of that other carriage, too."

"I don't understand."

He explained quickly. Five minutes later she had taken a seat in an Illinois Central suburban train at Twenty-second street. Twenty minutes later she was entering the fair at Fifty-seventh street, fully half an hour ahead of time.

Flanders and Jennings had not gone very far along Cottage Grove avenue before they realized that they had been outwitted. To Mr. Flander's mind this was an additional proof of Helen's guilt. No good girl could be up to tricks of this kind. Her suspicions had been aroused in some way and she had bribed the driver! The thought that she had corrupted the driver shocked him. She must be a very bad girl, indeed!

At the Cottage Grove avenue police station Inspector Henderson, of the Central station, was chatting with a sergeant in front of the door. He recognized the occupants of the carriage as it passed, and shouted to the driver to stop. Obtaining permission from Mr. Flanders, Jennings jumped out and walked back to the station. Mr. Flanders remained in the carriage, which had turned and followed the detective.

Inspector Henderson seemed to be particularly pleased to see Jennings. The two walked into the station. When

they came out again they were talking excitedly. Henderson was replacing a cabinet photograph in his pocket.

They approached the carriage. Mr. Flanders was becoming impatient. At least five minutes had been lost. Greatly to his surprise and amazement, Inspector Henderson opened the door for Jennings, and while the latter was entering, said to the driver :

“If there’s any good in that team of yours let us have it. Drive to the Fifty-seventh street entrance, and go like the devil!”

“This is my private carriage,” remarked Mr. Flanders, as Inspector Henderson took his seat.

“For the present it belongs to the City of Chicago,” rejoined the inspector, smiling. “There are times, Mr. Flanders, when we cannot stand on ceremony. This is one of them. Still, I owe you an explanation, and if your driver doesn’t get a move on him I will have plenty of time for all the explanations you may possibly require before we reach the fair.” Then, putting his head out of the window, he yelled to the driver: “I said go; why don’t you go? Do you hear?”

The driver whipped his horses, but they were not travelers.

“I must say,” continued the inspector, “that for a good man and a man of judgment, you are giving stable room to a pair of very worthless plugs, Mr. Flanders.”

Mr. Flanders didn’t like this kind of talk. He wasn’t fond of banter at any time. But he knew Inspector Henderson, and he knew Inspector Henderson knew him through and through, and he tried to smile.

“The fact of the matter is this,” said the inspector, lighting a fresh cigar, “I have just stumbled upon what my newspaper friends would call a peculiar coincidence.”

"Indeed!" assented Mr. Flanders, endeavoring to appear interested.

"Indeed I have," said the inspector as he threw a partly burnt match out of the window, "a very peculiar coincidence."

"Might I ask you to tell us about it, Henderson?" inquired Mr. Flanders, with a patronizing air.

"Well, yes, seeing it's you, Flanders, you might."

The inspector took a long pull at his cigar and watched the smoke curl upward and float through the open window before he resumed.

"I was just thinking about you when your carriage drove by. I was also thinking of Jennings here. I was likewise thinking of a young gentleman by the name of Mr. Henry Bolton. I wonder if you ever heard of him?"

"Henderson, you are joking, sir. Jennings has told you of the object of our present trip?"

"Yes, Jennings has told me—but Jennings did not tell me until I showed him this," and the inspector handed Mr. Flanders a cabinet photograph of Henry Bolton.

Mr. Flanders looked at the picture, looked at Jennings, looked at Inspector Henderson and waited for an explanation.

"I want that young man," said the inspector, puffing his cigar, and talking deliberately, "I want to meet him. He is a very nice looking fellow, don't you think so, Flanders?" and the inspector's lips twitched wickedly, as he saw how the distinguished business man started at the familiar use of his name. "He reminds me of somebody I know, too, but I can't for the life of me think who it can be!"

"Perhaps, Mr. Henderson," suggested Mr. Flanders, with dignity, and the inspector's lips twitched wickedly

again, as he noticed how quickly the eminently respectable business man took the hint and used the prefix "Mr." in addressing him. "Perhaps you may have met a newspaper writer or something named Powers?"

"By Jove! You've hit it, Flanders! You've hit it! Powers! Well, I guess I have met Ed. Powers! Knew him as a boy. Knew him when he first began to work on a newspaper. Been out with him on many an excursion. Saved my life one night down in 'Cheyenne' by his quick wit. Shook hands with the fellow who was going to blow my head off and asked after his sister Kate. Powers had helped the girl into a good situation at the county hospital while her brother was doing time at Joliet. A second later and I would have been a dead fly-cop. Powers said, 'Jimmie, he's my friend,' and Jimmie gave me my life. Then Powers said, 'Let him go this time, Henderson,' and I gave Jimmie his liberty. Yes, sir; I know Ed. Powers, and I'd like to see the boy. Why, this fellow Bolton is a dead ringer for him, ain't he?"

"You were saying that you wanted this fellow Bolton?"

"Yes, I want him very much. Yet I am puzzled, Mr. Flanders, greatly puzzled. Perhaps you may help me?"

"If I can consistently, I will help you, Mr. Henderson; but I am situated rather delicately regarding this young man. He is my nephew. His father is one of my oldest friends. I don't care a fig for the rascal himself, but for the sake of his family——"

"Yes, I understand. A great many rascals are kept out of the penitentiary for the sake of their families. The poor devils who haven't got any families to disgrace, and who never disgrace anybody but themselves, are the ones who go down. I understand you, Mr. Flanders."

“As far as I am personally concerned, I have no interest in the case,” returned Mr. Flanders, haughtily.

“But you have!”

“What do you mean, sir?”

“I mean you have a great personal interest in the case!”

“You are mistaken, Inspector.”

“This young man is on terms of intimacy with a member of your family!”

“I am aware of it, and it is in the hope of breaking off this intimacy that I am now going to the fair. This young person is my niece—my niece by marriage only—Miss St. Vincent——”

“That is not the name of the person I allude to!”

“Perhaps you refer to her companion, Mrs. Arnold?”

“No, I do not!”

“To whom, then, do you refer?”

“To Miss Jessie Flanders!”

CHAPTER IX.

Helen found on looking at her watch as she entered the woman's building that she had fifteen minutes to spare—fifteen minutes more for thought. Fearful lest she should meet some of her acquaintances, she strolled among the least interesting of the exhibits and kept out of the light as much as possible.

Her mind was busy with the past, busy with the present, but particularly busy with the future. She had determined on the accomplishment of three things—no matter what the sacrifice might be at her hands. She would make full reparation to Edmund Powers. She would give her life to him. She had unlimited faith in him. She believed he loved her—was devoted to her—would do anything for her. But he, too, must make a sacrifice. She did not for a moment question his devotion or his loyalty. She could depend upon him in all things—always. Her uncle, Dr. Bolton, must be saved from unhappiness. He must not only be saved from unhappiness, but he must be made the happiest of men. She knew how this could be brought about, with the help of Edmund, with the help of God! Henry Bolton must be reclaimed, for her uncle's sake.

Through all the future, no matter what might happen, she would not be alone! Edmund Powers would be at her side, helping her, sustaining her, comforting her. That was a glorious thought! Even in sorrow his presence, his help, his love would give her strength and bring her happiness.

How could she have made that mistake? As she remembered Henry Bolton, he was a mere awkward youth, just changing from boyhood into manhood. The man on the staircase that night was physically rounded, well formed, almost an athlete. She had not seen Henry Bolton, besides, for five years, and the Henry Bolton she remembered could not be confused with the man she had mistaken for Edmund Powers. But remembrance comes upon us at times like an electric flash, and so it came to Helen.

She remembered Henry Bolton's father as a younger man—as a middle-aged man—as the happy head of the Boston home, full of life and full of purpose. So gradual had been the change from middle to old age that she had not perceived it, but the remarkable resemblance was there—the resemblance that had puzzled her so often, between Edmund Powers and somebody she had known before. Edmund Powers was Dr. William Bolton as a younger man. Now she was able to explain the strange conviction that she had seen Edmund Powers somewhere before meeting him in Chicago. Why, was not Dr. Bolton's mother a Miss Powers? Was not William P—William Powers—Flanders named after Dr. Bolton's grandfather? And that song Edmund had composed—the song she had sung at the reception—why, the very words of Dr. Bolton's favorite song—the very jingle of the verses were familiar! In all her anxiety, in all her misery, she had to smile as these recollections crowded themselves upon her.

Edmund Powers must have heard that old song—a song composed by one of her ancestors—must have heard it, perhaps, when a boy, and as a man he had unconsciously composed one that might serve as a companion to it. His

was entitled "When the Tide Is Going Out." The song she had heard her uncle sing years ago was called "When the Tide is Coming In." And now she could recall every line, every word of it, and in spite of herself she ran it over in her mind.

Here it is. Here it is as I copied it from an old folio in Dr. Bolton's residence some months later :

WHEN THE TIDE IS COMING IN.

Somehow, love, our boat sails lighter,
 Smoother, faster on the bay—
 Somehow, love, the sun shines brighter
 Softer, warmer thro' the spray—
 Somehow, love, the sky is clearer,
 God and man seem nearer kin—
 Somehow, even you are dearer
 When the tide is coming in!

'Tis the spring of life, unending
 At the source of motion, dear!
 'Tis the stream of hope ascending
 From the depths of ocean, dear!
 'Tis the heart of nature, beating
 Where the throbs of life begin!
 Earth and heaven gladly meeting,
 When the tide is coming in.

Somehow, love, your eyes are brighter,
 Softer, warmer thro' the spray,
 And your laughter ripples lighter
 O'er the whitecaps on the bay!
 In our path no tinge of sadness,
 In our wake no shade of sin,
 For our hearts are filled with gladness,
 When the tide is coming in!

She looked at her watch again. It was five minutes after five. She had been lost in a reverie.

Hastening to the east entrance she descended the steps and walked rapidly toward the south. As she turned the corner she almost ran into a young man and a young woman who were engaged in earnest conversation. They did not observe her, and she retreated backward.

The young man she would have mistaken for Edmund Powers had she not been prepared for the meeting. The young woman was Jessie Flanders.

A few moments later, when Mr. Flanders, looking across the court from the Children's building, beheld his daughter in conversation with Henry Bolton—a consummate ruffian and a fugitive from justice—he became convinced, without waiting for proof and without desiring to obtain any other than that afforded by his eyesight, that his daughter—in his own peculiar way of putting it—had forgotten herself.

But such a thought never entered Helen's mind. She saw what this meeting meant; she saw that it was not brought about by chance; that Jessie had planned it, and that Jessie's motives were the highest and the purest imaginable.

Jessie had begun and carried out an investigation on her own account—not that she deemed it necessary to Helen's vindication, but that she might hasten the bringing about of an understanding which would result in establishing pleasanter relations between her friend and her father.

Her first step was to find me. I very well recollect the afternoon she called at the Press Club. Two of my friends were chatting by one of the windows looking out on Clark street. I was supposed to be listening, but in

reality I was thinking of Helen, and how beautiful and happy she looked the evening before. The bell rang, and one of the colored attendants a few moments later handed a card to Mr. Caldwell, who immediately went into the reception parlor. I saw, between the portieres, that he was conversing with a young lady. After a time he brought her close to the archway between the reception room and the club parlors and whispered something to her.

I saw her glance first at Mr. Ranks and then at me. It was a rapid but a most comprehensive glance, and I thought her a very pretty girl. Then I heard her thank Mr. Caldwell heard the parting common places at the door, and the author of "A Trip to Mars" returned to his place at the window.

"I would like to know what that young lady wanted," he remarked, carelessly, as he took his seat.

"Didn't you find out?" asked the other.

"I thought I did—until she left; then I discovered that I didn't," was Mr. Caldwell's reply. "She asked me a dozen question, about publishers, books and things, but didn't pay any attention to my answers. Then she wanted to know if any of the celebrities—besides myself, you know—were in, and I mentioned Powers and you. She was very anxious to see you, Ranks, so I gave her a private view. No, she declined an introduction. Some other time she hoped to have the pleasure of meeting you. Then it was 'Oh, thank you ever so much for your kindness,' etc., and she was gone. Her card? Oh, yes, Miss Anna Larkins—here it is."

She was convinced that I was not the man she had seen on the stairs. It required very little evidence to bring about this conviction. She had already made some progress in another direction.

The colored servant, Frank, was driving the carriage that awaited her at the foot of the stairs. Frank had seen me that afternoon, and was positive I was not the man he had admitted to the house on the night of the double assault. There was a wonderful resemblance—a “pow’ful” resemblance, Frank had told her—but he could not be mistaken; I was not the man. Jessie’s visit to the Press Club had removed every doubt. Helen’s Mr. Powers was entirely innocent. Jessie was “awful glad” of that. But who was the ruffian?—certainly somebody who knew Helen.

Thus far Jessie had done well as an amateur detective. If she could only keep her own counsel now and be patient she would solve the mystery, for she had Frank to help her, and Frank had sworn to stand by her to the bitter end.

It was becoming interesting, too—it was “jolly,” Jessie thought—and if she only succeeded in running down the villain and vindicating Helen in the last act, while her father looked on discomfited and her mother looked on amazed, and if it could be brought about so that the *denouement* might occur in the parlor, under the light of the chandeliers, say about midnight—and she could say “Helen, I have saved you; kiss me, my sister!”—if only this might happen, all that would be lacking to make it greater than any play she had ever seen would be the slow music of a hidden orchestra, some colored lights and a drop curtain.

But Jessie had to stop where she was for the present. She could go no farther. Frank could keep his eyes and ears open. She would do the same. Something would happen. In the meantime mum was the word.

The morning of Bolton's visit to Mr. Flanders' office, Frank had seen and recognized the fellow and had followed him from one place to another until he finally entered what Mr. Flanders had pronounced one of the vilest dives in Chicago.

Frank was intelligent and quick-witted. Satisfied that his man would remain here for a time he drove the carriage to a livery stable on Michigan avenue, and, giving hasty instructions, went to the telephone. It took a little time and a great deal of patience to get Miss Jessie Flanders to the other end of the wire at the World's Fair hotel, where she was stopping with her parents, but he was rewarded at last, and in less than an hour Jessie met him at a well-known corner drug store in the center of the city.

In the meantime Frank had established and maintained communication with the negro bar assistant in the basement resort; had seen Mr. Flanders, Mr. Jennings and a strange gentleman enter and leave; had found out what they had discovered, and more—he knew where "Ed. Powers" roomed, where he took his meals, and where he could be found at certain hours of the day and night, for the negro assistant made it his business to keep acquainted with the movements of the regular and irregular frequenters of the place. It was worth an occasional five dollar bill at police headquarters to know things which were apparently of no interest to him.

Jessie had listened to all Frank had to tell her. The plot was thickening. Could there be two Edmund Powers? No. Jessie was too intelligent not to see that this stranger had assumed the name because it suited his purpose to take on an alias. She had remarked, and her mother had referred to it, how quickly he had changed

his attitude and his expression when Helen called him "Edmund." But Helen had not called him Powers! How was she to account for that? How did he know there was such a person as Edmund Powers in existence? And, if he were aware of it, why should he assume that the name would be accepted as a password by her father?

Here was an obstacle she couldn't get over, but she did the sensible thing—the thing all sensible women do when they meet an obstacle—she walked around it—left it to take care of itself.

"Call the carriage, Frank," she said, "and drive me to papa's office."

She found her father preparing to leave on very important business, he told her. Why had she called? To learn something about that affair of Helen's? Well, she must let that affair of Helen's alone. She must have nothing to do with Helen. Helen was not the kind of a person he wanted her to be interested in. Why? Never mind why. She knew enough already. No, she did not know enough; she only knew that it was not Mr. Powers who called at the house that night—it was another man altogether.

Jessie expected that this would surprise her father, but she was mistaken. How did she learn so much? Frank had seen Mr. Powers, and Mr. Powers was not the man. Had Frank seen the other man? Yes!

"Now, Jessie," said her father, "I want you to stop right here. You had no business to meddle in this matter. It is not your place. You cannot touch it without soiling your hands. I know who the other man is—the real man. Helen knows who he is—she knew him when she called him by another name. She has attempted to shield him at the expense of Mr. Powers."

“I don't believe it.”

“What!”

“I don't believe it.”

“Come here, Jessie.”

He took her by the arm and led her to a chair by his desk. Seating himself, he ran over the story which he told Helen later on that day.

“Now,” he said, with severity, “I want you to go to your mother directly. Do not interfere in this matter again—do you hear me? I will not have it.”

“What are you going to do, papa?”

“That is for me to decide. Go to your mother.”

“You have not forgotten that Henry Bolton is my cousin, have you?”

“No, I have not—I've forgotten nothing—I do not need to be reminded of anything. Go to your mother.”

Jessie rose, said good-bye to her father, and left the office.

His authority had never been questioned, to his knowledge, by his wife or daughter, his employes or his servants. Jessie had her orders. She would obey them, and he dismissed the matter from his mind.

Jessie would not wilfully disobey her father, but she would not do wrong, nor what she believed to be wrong, at his command. She believed him to be wrong now—very wrong. As a duty she owed him, as well as a plain duty to Helen, she would not stop here.

“Take me to the Ashland block,” she said to Frank, as he assisted her into the carriage.

On one of the upper floors of that great building she entered a stenographer's and typewriter's office, and within a few minutes had signed and sealed the following letter:

Chicago, Sept. 12, 1893. Henry Bolton. Dear Sir:—I beg of you to meet me in the ladies' parlor of the Palmer house as quickly as possible. I do not need to make any explanation. You are fully identified and may be arrested at any moment. I have a great favor to ask of you and if you grant it I will see that no harm befalls you. Do meet me, won't you? Send answer by bearer.

JESSIE FLANDERS.

Frank carried this note, addressed on the envelope in Jessie's handwriting to "Mr. Ed. Powers," with all haste to the basement resort, and handed it to his friend—the negro bar assistant. Powers was not in. It would be handed to him as soon as he returned.

Jessie spent two hours of that afternoon in the Palmer House parlor waiting for Henry Bolton. Frank was constantly running backward and forward. At last he brought some news—news that startled Jessie for a moment. Powers had returned and had found, besides Jessie's, another note awaiting him. He read both hastily, tore one up, threw the scraps over the bar, and handed the other to the negro, requesting the latter to take care of it for the present. He appeared to be excited and left in a hurry. The bar assistant had collected the scraps. Frank had them in his hand now, crushed almost to a pulp.

It was an easy matter to put the pieces together, as the note was a short one.

But what did it mean? Jessie was puzzled. Helen, it seemed, knew just where to find Bolton, and how to address him! The note was even a friendly one. She did not upbraid the man who had insulted her—she pleaded for his assistance!

Yet Jessie believed in Helen. Never for a moment did she allow an unkind thought concerning her young friend to find a lodgment in her mind.

“It is all right,” thought she, “I don’t understand it but it’s all right. Helen will tell me everything, and make everything plain, some time. Drive me to the viaduct, Frank.”

Frank would have driven Jessie into Lake Michigan had she ordered him to do so. He asked no questions—he never asked questions—but he could not help thinking. Even the best of servants must think at times.

Jessie was waiting on the outside for Mr. Henry Bolton to put in an appearance, while Helen was dreaming of the past, present and future inside the Woman’s building. Henry Bolton put in an appearance promptly on time.

Jessie recognized him instantly. “He resembles Mr. Powers,” she thought, “but only slightly. I never would mistake one for the other.”

The young man was walking toward her, but was glancing nervously around.

“This is Mr. Henry Bolton?”

He turned quickly and faced the person who addressed him. A lie was on his lips but he did not utter it. It would have been useless. He remembered Jessie’s face well.

“Yes; you are my cousin, I believe? I received your note, but did not expect to meet you here. Perhaps Helen accompanies you?”

“No, I am alone. It doesn’t matter how I happen to be here. I want you to come to our house and explain to my father everything that occurred the other night—everything!”

“Jessie—I suppose I may call you Jessie?—I cannot do what you ask. I don’t like to make explanations.”

“Not even to set Helen right?”

“There is no reason why I should go to your house to set Helen right.” Then he paused and bit his lips. “There is no reason why I should go to any trouble on Helen’s account.” His manner was surly.

“Why do you say that?”

“Because I owe Helen nothing.”

“She is your cousin, your friend, your old playmate—your promised wife!”

“She has forgotten her cousin, her friend, her old playmate and her promised husband. She has deceived me. I know all about her relations with Powers. I heard of them weeks ago.”

“You are wrong. She has remembered you kindly, lovingly always. She expected to marry you; I don’t think she has a thought of marrying anybody else.”

“She would not marry me now—would she?”

“Let me answer that question, Henry,” broke in Helen, who had approached and had overheard Bolton’s anxious inquiry. Giving the young man her hand, she continued, “at some other time and in some other place.”

Flanders and Jennings were watching every movement of the the three young people from a window on the second floor of the Model Nursery.

As Helen took Bolton’s hand, Flanders turned to Jennings and said :

“I wish your inspector could see that.”

But Jennings was not listening.

Helen had not paused. Her beautiful eyes were full of tears. She was very pale. Jennings could see that she was talking rapidly and with intense earnestness.

“What has changed you, Henry?” she almost cried, through suppressed sobs. “What has changed you? How could you! How could you!”

She was looking into his face, still holding his hand.

"Oh, Henry, tell me it is all a mistake—all a lie! You know how I have always loved you, Henry. You know I would do anything for you! Can't I help you?"

Not a word of reproof; not a syllable of reproach!

There was something more beautiful, more sublime, than the passion we call love in this girl's pure, unselfish, unchanging and undying affection for her old playmate; it had in it the disinterestedness a good sister bestows upon an erring brother; the great charity a loving mother throws around an erring son. She looked into his eyes pleadingly as she spoke.

Bolton was touched—touched to the heart. He had not expected this—he had been prepared for everything but this. The first manly impulse that had taken possession of him for several years seized him now and he stooped and kissed her.

"What is it Henry? What is it that has changed you so much. Do you need money? Take mine—take all I've got, Henry, if it will save you! Do you need love—take mine! Is it your companions—let us go away where you will never see them again! What can I do to help you? Tell me, Henry, and I will do it!"

Jessie had her arm around Helen's waist now. How could she ever love this dear girl enough!

Suddenly Helen started. Then in a whisper she addressed herself to Bolton:—

"You are followed and watched. The Pullman exhibit in the Transportation building. Go at once and wait for me. Here's your chance!"

She had taken his arm and had actually pushed him along by the side of an ambulance passing between them and the Children's building.

When the wagon had passed, Mr. Flanders and Mr. Jennings, just then crossing the court, saw Helen and Jessie ascending the steps of the Woman's building. Bolton had disappeared.

It was no difficult matter to lose one's self or to hide one's self among the great throngs of the world's fair. Once out of sight you were swallowed up in the surging tide of humanity. Thousands of people parted in the morning to meet no more that day—to meet no more until they were reunited that night at their hotels or homes.

Every exhibition building was a labyrinth. Your companion paused for a moment to examine something especially attractive, in a lateral corridor, perhaps. You were carried along the main aisle. Suddenly you missed your companion. In the early days of the fair you instituted a search—wasted the day fruitlessly. Later on you gave your companion up for lost, with the hope of meeting him or her in the next world, at least. The experienced and the wise soon learned to fix rendezvous, but even these were not always reliable, for different people had different meeting places, and you were apt to get them mixed.

I once knew a man who waited all day for his wife on the balcony of the Wisconsin building. I once knew a woman who waited all day for her husband on the balcony of the Michigan building. These people waited and fretted and became furious on identically the same day. They were waiting for each other, by appointment. And though time has softened the asperities born of the disappointment of that long day, they never have become entirely reconciled. Each is positive that the other made a blunder.

Now, the moment Mr. Jennings saw that Bolton had disappeared he left Mr. Flanders' side, precipitately. Mr. Flanders followed for a few paces, then thought of Jessie and ran up the steps of the Woman's building. His lovely daughter wore an Eton jacket. There were 500 Eton jackets within the range of his vision. She wore a sailor hat, and there were almost as many sailor hats as there were Eton jackets. She wore a man's turndown collar, a man's necktie and a man's——. How he despised these things always, and how he despised them more than ever to-day, as he was elbowed, cuffed, stepped upon, outraged, by the girls and women who wore them!

But Jessie was not in sight; neither was Helen, for as he walked through the main room for the fifth time Jessie was kissing Helen good-by and hoping she would write, and begging her to forgive her father, and kissing her again, and brushing away her tears—a half a mile away, near one of the rear entrances to the Transportation building.

And Jennings, too, was hopelessly at sea. He had first followed the avenue toward the state buildings and had decided he was wrong. He then returned over the same avenue as far south as the Horticultural building, and decided he was wrong. He then made across the bridge to the Wooded Island and toward the fisheries, and decided he was wrong. He then returned to the Woman's building, passed through the central doors, out toward the intramural railway, and decided he was wrong. He then sat down near the Public Comfort building, wiped the perspiration from his brow and—swore—inwardly and outwardly, without mental reservation or regard for consequences.

Jennings believed that Inspector Henderson would be very angry, would charge him with stupidity, carelessness, perhaps with treachery. Had he not taken the responsibility of this case upon himself? Had he not promised the inspector to have Bolton under arrest inside of an hour? What could the inspector think but that Flanders had induced him to let the ruffian slip away?

When Inspector Henderson mentioned the name of Miss Jessie Flanders in the carriage, that delightful young lady's father became speechless for a time. Jessie's visit to his office that morning, and the talk that ensued, occurred to him at once, and he felt that she must have compromised herself in some way. Flanders was so constituted that he would at that moment have inwardly believed, while outwardly contesting it, anything that might be charged against his daughter. He remembered how disrespectful Henderson had been at times during the ride, and how sarcastic at other times. The respectable business man was afraid to ask a question—dreaded the reply he might receive should he put one.

He could explain Jessie's connection with the affair plausibly, at least, if Henderson would only listen to him respectfully. But Henderson had uttered his daughter's name with a sneer, he thought, and there was an expression of triumph in the face of the inspector when he saw how it had struck her father.

Henderson was a policeman—had been on the force eighteen years or so—and had learned, so the merchant reasoned, to treat all such explanations as he thought of making with offensive cynicism.

But his silence would be misinterpreted. He must speak, at all hazards, and the inspector listened to him attentively while he spoke.

“My daughter’s interest in this affair is that of a silly, sentimental girl. That is all, Mr. Henderson,” he concluded, having gone over the whole story, from the scene on the staircase in his home, three nights before, to his interview with Jessie that morning. “She believes Miss St. Vincent is innocent of any wrong, in the face of every proof, and is foolishly endeavoring to vindicate her. I can’t imagine how you learned of her connection with this matter, but you should not judge from appearances.”

At that moment Helen’s words came back to him. But Helen was Helen, and Jessie was—well, his daughter. The cases were entirely different.

He had presented everything in the most unfavorable light for Helen. He was uncharitable and even brutal in his manner of presenting her side of the case. He seemed to enjoy telling how he had fixed the guilt upon her. He could not resist repeating the coarse address he had made before parting with her that afternoon, though he was silent regarding the part Mrs. Arnold had taken in the conversation.

Inspector Henderson afterward told me that it would have afforded him the greatest pleasure to have thrown Flanders out of the carriage.

“Now, Mr. Flanders,” he said, when his respectable companion had become silent, “I imagine you think I jump at conclusions. I don’t. It’s because I don’t jump at conclusions that I have been able to hold my position and win promotion on the Chicago police force, in spite of political and other influences—other influences, Mr. Flanders, brought to bear to secure my removal.”

Mr. Flanders winced. He remembered how he had once called upon the mayor with a purpose not entirely friendly to Inspector Henderson—because Inspector

Henderson had been rather severe on a tenant of his—a gentleman who conducted “a square game” on South Clark street.

“I am not a sleuth, Mr. Flanders, nor do we have any sleuths on the force, if we know it. They are found occasionally in private detective agencies, but principally in cheap novels and on the staffs of cheap newspapers. I did not know how Miss Flanders happened to be interested in this man, but I felt that the chances were nine hundred and ninety-nine to one that her motive in writing this note was a good one.”

He handed Mr. Flanders the note Jessie had sent to Bolton.

“It did not occur to me that she could be connected with him except as the result of an accident. I don’t pretend to have any inside information regarding the domestic life of the people of Chicago, but I make it my business to investigate, Mr. Flanders, before I say or do anything that would cast a shadow upon the name of any man or woman, and I have some knowledge now of the standing and the character of Miss Flanders.”

Mr. Flanders could only look and listen.

“It is not necessary for me to say,” continued the inspector, with a smile that might mean nothing or everything, just as one happened to take it, “that I have had knowledge of the unsullied private and business character of her father for several years.”

Mr. Flanders changed his position and endeavored to appear unconscious of the sarcasm.

“You have spoken of a Miss St. Vincent. Do you recognize this?”

He handed Mr. Flanders a photograph, which caused that worthy citizen to turn pale.

"Yes it is Miss St. Vincent's picture."

"I was not aware of that fact until I learned your story, Mr. Flanders. This picture accompanied Bolton's. Both came to me from Inspector Byrnes, of New York. The young lady's photograph was found in Bolton's trunk with a bundle of letters, Inspector Byrnes said, evidently written by her under the impression that her correspondent was in Europe. Some were addressed to Dresden, some to Munich, some to Stuttgart, but all had been remailed to Bolton in New York, where the latter wrote his replies, antedating them. There was a general opinion among the inspector's men that a woman, a young and attractive one, was operating with Bolton, and when this picture was found it was supposed to be that of the woman in the case. But Inspector Byrnes had read some of the letters, and saw that this was a portrait of the writer. He was satisfied from both, that she was simply an innocent young lady who had become entangled in the affairs of an unconscionable rascal. The man who had found this picture insisted upon it that this Helen—you see it is signed 'Helen'—was the accomplice of Bolton they were after, and to his repeated assertions what do you suppose Inspector Byrnes replied?"

"The natural supposition, of course," replied Mr. Flanders, "would be that the man was correct."

"No," rejoined Henderson, hotly. "That would have been the unnatural supposition. The man who could look in this girl's face, in this girl's eyes, and pronounce her a bad woman would be either a scoundrel or a fool."

Mr. Flanders was startled, but he felt it necessary to sustain his dignity.

"Looks are very deceptive," he said. "We judge people by their actions."

“Well, I have given you my opinion, Mr. Flanders, and my opinion agrees with Inspector Byrnes’, though, perhaps, he did not express it in the same way. He sent me this photograph in the hope that it might chance to be useful in locating Bolton, as a number of letters were written from Chicago—No.—, Michigan avenue.”

“My house,” interrupted Mr. Flanders.

“Inspector Byrnes was so fully convinced of this young lady’s innocence of any complicity in Bolton’s wrongdoing that he burnt the letters.”

The inspector then hurriedly went over the incidents of the afternoon, connecting Jessie with the case as I have mentioned them. He knew of Frank’s inquiries at the basement dive, of the delivery of the note, of the frequent calls made by the colored servant, of Bolton’s return, of the torn note, and the collection of scraps—in short he knew everything that the negro bar attendant had learned from Frank and from observation.

He told Mr. Flanders that when he called at the basement in the afternoon to make a haphazard inquiry regarding Bolton, alias Martin, alias Powers, the negro unbosomed himself. The latter could only tell the inspector Powers had left word that he was going to the fair and would return about 8 o’clock that evening. Inspector Henderson had at first made up his mind to wait patiently for Power’s return. He found, however, that other business called him to the Cottage Grove avenue station, and he determined, if he could spare the time, to visit the exposition. He was about to take a car when Flanders and Jennings made their appearance.

He was on the right track, he knew, for the photograph he carried with him had been identified as that of the man who styled himself Ed. Powers by the negro bar

assistant, the barkeeper and the special policeman of the basement resort. The name of Powers is not an uncommon one—even if it were not, he never would have thought of connecting his old friend Edmund Powers, whom he had not seen for several years, but of whom he had heard the best of reports frequently, with such an affair as he had in hand. The photograph had reminded him of somebody he knew, but the closer he examined it the fainter became the resemblance to Powers.

He could see no harm now in telling Mr. Flanders that Bolton, alias Martin, alias Powers, was wanted in New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore for various crimes. He had gathered his information with relation to Bolton's career principally from the letters received at headquarters, and from newspaper clippings forwarded by Inspector Byrnes.

Bolton was a character who puzzled the police of the east. He had been frequently under arrest, but nobody had appeared against him. This was due to the fact that he was a clever swindler and had almost invariably, up to six months or so before, swindled very clever business men—men who would not, when the time came for prosecution, subject themselves to the ridicule of their friends by confessing how easily they had been victimized.

So far as the police knew he had no criminal record dating farther back than the middle of 1892. About that time he carried visiting cards to a number of gentlemen's clubs in New York, and was regarded as a most worthy and companionable fellow—a very clubable man. Then it began to be whispered that he was making a number of private loans, which he failed to repay. He was very fond of cards, lost money and paid his losses—when he could. His little irregularities were borne with for some



"SUDDENLY, IN WHITE, HER GOLDEN HAIR FALLING OVER HER SHOULDERS * * *
HELEN ST. VINCENT APPEARED AT THE HEAD OF THE STAIRS."

time, because he was young, because he was handsome, because he was full of experience; had traveled much, had the polish of a gentleman and had made friends who could afford to pay for the pleasure of his society.

It soon came out that he had left numerous debts of honor and a generally bad record behind him in Europe. Three or four checks signed "William Bolton" were thrown out of a Boston bank and pronounced forgeries, but before proceedings could be commenced telegrams were received that the bank had made a blunder and that the checks would be cashed. About this time a large remittance arrived for the young man, and it was understood that he would as once return to Europe.

He next appeared, but in different haunts, as Henry Martin. The professional swindlers of New York—the men who engage in everything from vulgar bunco to refined forgery—are always on the lookout for young fellows of Bolton's stripe—well-bred criminals—and Bolton was soon taken into everything that gave promise of good results—and taken in on the ground floor.

He was able to place bogus mining shares, bogus building and loan certificates, bogus checks and bogus bank notes. Before he had been in the business long he had earned the reputation of being one of the most expert operators in the east. He had engaged in a few blackmailing schemes, also, and for these, as well as for a forgery in New York, a swindle in connection with a real estate deal in Philadelphia, and a number of shady transactions in Baltimore, he was wanted now.

Like hundreds of others of the same stamp, he was a consummate fool at the gaming table. His infatuation for cards was at the bottom of all his crimes. He would do anything, he could be induced to do anything for money

that he might have the pleasure of squandering it at the faro table. His gains finally found their way into the hands of blacklegs who swindled him, as he swindled others, without compunction and without mercy. So that, after all, he was generally hard up. It was only when out of money—at the end of his string—that he would conceive or execute swindling schemes. His resources were phenomenal and his success invariable. He was looked upon as a dangerous man, and the sooner he could be landed behind the walls of a penitentiary the better.

Inspector Henderson had him within his clutches that afternoon, he thought. There was no possible escape for Bolton now—even if he should fail to keep the appointment at the fair, he would certainly be pounced upon in the basement dive, where two of the inspector's best men were detailed. It would be a good stroke, this capture; one that could not fail to bring credit to the Chicago police. Inspector Henderson was a man who thought of the whole force. He was proud when any member of it did a creditable thing; he felt humiliated when any member of it did a discreditable thing.

And he did not believe in display. He was not fond of theatrical effects. To carry out his plans in a business-like way, without resorting to any of the cheap and threadbare tricks of a trade which he felt could be made entirely honorable, was his greatest desire.

The credit for the capture would not, by right, belong to him. The case had been worked up very skillfully by Jennings before he came into it. Of course, Jennings had not known that Bolton was wanted; he had gone into it principally to serve Mr. Flanders, one of his influential friends and a man with a strong "pull" at headquarters,

but whatever his intentions or his motives might have been, he had conducted the pursuit with discretion, the inspector believed, and had run down the man he was after.

So that when Mr. Flanders requested, appealed, almost begged, that the arrest be made as quietly as possible, and that Jennings be allowed to handle it with a view to keeping any scandal away from the merchant's family, the inspector was considerate. He was inclined, however, to be less considerate when Flanders spoke of the pain the arrest would cause the culprit's father and mother, as well as the harm it might do Miss St. Vincent, if he were booked under his proper name.

"You have exhibited very little delicacy in this matter yourself, Mr. Flanders," said the inspector. "If you had only taken Miss St. Vincent properly, she would have spared you a great deal of trouble. You began by insulting the young lady, and you have continued to insult her. You have not treated her fairly. I will not say more than this. You must promise me that unless there is more proof against her than you now have she will not be annoyed further. I think you will find that her purpose is to call him to an account, and to endeavor to have him make a frank confession of the whole affair. Can I trust you to handle this matter, Jennings?"

"You can, inspector."

"Do you want any assistance?"

"No, I would prefer to work alone."

"Very well. It is now two minutes of five." They were leaving the carriage at Sixty-fourth street. "Get yourself into a Columbian guard uniform as quickly as possible, arrest Bolton ostensibly for some offense committed on the grounds. You will have no difficulty in handling him by taking this course. Bring him to me at

the service building. Now, you'd better go. Mr. Flanders may watch the south entrance of the Woman's building in the meantime. Mind, Mr. Flanders, you must not move a finger without instructions from Jennings."

Jennings ran toward the service building, but was summoned back by the inspector. "If you should be satisfied, Jennings," he whispered, "that this Miss St. Vincent is thicker with Bolton than I think she is—and you know how I feel about it—or if she should take anything from him, or connive at his escape, or appear to be an accomplice in any way, why, you know your duty. She must be arrested. But I don't think you will find it necessary to touch her. As to Miss Flanders—well, don't pay any attention to her. Now, you'll have to hurry."

Jennings thought of all this, as I have said, and swore, wiping the perspiration from his forehead. He condemned himself to everlasting punishment, and perhaps, with the desire of having a congenial associate in the regions where he hoped to take up his permanent abode, he also condemned the pure-minded and incorruptible Christian gentleman, Mr. Flanders—and condemned him all the more because he was not to blame for Bolton's escape.

Jennings knew this perfectly well. That sweet young thing over whose lovely face the inspector had gone into ecstasies in the carriage—that lovely creature who could not be bad, because she had big eyes and a pretty face—that innocent soul who had taken Bolton by the hand and who had allowed the ruffian to kiss her—after the dirty trick he had played her at Mr. Flanders' house—had managed the escape!

Jennings ran up the steps, caught a train going south on the intramural railroad, and jumped off at the

Transportation building. Plunging headlong down the steps and across the avenue he almost ran into Helen and Jessie, but he did not notice them.

Inspector Henderson becoming nervous, had wandered toward the Woman's building to see what was going on, but Jennings acted in his absence. In a few minutes Columbian guards were carrying descriptions of Bolton and Helen to all the exits.

Jennings, without wasting time, set out to find the inspector, and the inspector, returning in haste by the intramural, was back at the Columbian Guard headquarters when Jennings had reached the Woman's building.

Intelligence of the escape reaching the inspector at last, he communicated the fact to central headquarters, asked that the men detailed at the basement dive be notified, and suggested that the railroad depots and steamboat piers be watched by men provided with descriptions of Bolton. He had knowledge of Jennings' precautionary measures at the exits, and approved of them. It puzzled him to conceive how Jennings could have been outwitted; but he did not suspect him of treachery, as Jennings supposed he would, nor did he blame him, without knowing how the escape had been effected. He blamed himself and suspected Flanders.

When Jennings told him the whole story the inspector was greatly perplexed. The hand-shake, the kiss, Helen's recognition of Flanders and Jennings as they crossed the court, and the advantage taken of the passing ambulance—all this looked bad for the young woman. He had to confess it to himself. He had to confess it to Jennings. The young woman must be found—arrested and compelled to make an explanation!

CHAPTER XI.

Three days have elapsed since I dictated the concluding lines of the preceding chapter. They tell me I have had a high fever, and that I have been somewhat delirious. I know I have wandered in my mind. Oh! the long journeys I have taken, up mountain sides, adown river banks, through orchards and meadows, across streams, along dusty roads and shaded by-paths, always going to reach, but never quite reaching, a place where I could lie down and rest.

And in those never-ending journeyings the face of Helen St. Vincent was ever before me—Helen's beautiful, girlish face, with those melting blue eyes of hers looking into mine so lovingly and so sorrowfully! And at times I had attempted to take it between my hands, only to find that it was all a dream. But it came and came again, until once it seemed so real that I raised myself from my pillow and cried out:

“Oh! Helen! Why don't you stay?”

And my answer was the gentle whisper of a trained nurse who sat beside my cot:

“You must be quiet—you must be very quiet—or you won't get well. There, now,” and my head was laid back on the smooth and turned pillow.

I have never had the least occasion to complain of any want of attention or any lack of kindness on the part of the nurses. I thought it a little singular at first that I should have been taken to the Presbyterian hospital. I

have since learned that after the shooting I was first carried to the county hospital, near by, and afterward, the next day, I believe, removed here.

I thought it singular. While I have never been as regular in my attendance upon any church as I should have been, my people for generations were of that stamp that took considerable pride in their staunch Presbyterianism. The question of religion came up only once between Miss St. Vincent and myself, and I discovered that she was a very devout Roman Catholic. That was long before I confessed my love for her, and I had a slight suspicion when she told me she could never be my wife that religious prejudice had something to do with bringing about her decision. Of course, this suspicion was groundless. Helen's belief was catholic in the highest sense. She was entirely free from small prejudices or bigotry.

It was, then, something of a coincidence that I should have been removed to the Presbyterian hospital, for I don't believe a dozen of my acquaintances could ever guess what either my faith or my creed might be.

Later on, when I went into the history of the two families—Helen's and mine—it struck me as being most peculiar that she should be a Roman Catholic and that I should be a Presbyterian, but it all came about in the most natural of ways.

What would become of the creeds if it were not for the influence of women?

Edmund Powers, the firm believer in Roman Catholicism, married Helene St. Vincent, the almost fanatical Calvinist. That was the first step. Vincent St. Vincent, the bitter Huguenot, married Agnes Powers, the fanatical Roman Catholic. That was the second step. Mothers mold the minds of their children, and wield an

immense influence over the minds of their sons. The male descendants of Edmund Powers and the male descendants of Vincent St. Vincent followed the religion of their mothers. The Powers became Calvinists; the St. Vincents became Romanists. Though intermarriages were not uncommon, and though there are male descendants of Edmund Powers who are Roman Catholics, and male descendants of Vincent St. Vincent who are Calvinists, there have been very rare deviations from the direct lines.

Let me repeat, I have never had the least cause for complaint in this hospital. From my young manhood, almost from my boyhood, I have been without a home. There were a great many of us children—too many of us. I was provided with a good education, and when my father had given me a few dollars and my mother had given me a parting embrace and I had kissed my sisters and half the girls in the village, and shaken hands with my brothers and half the boys and men in the county, I set out from my New England home for the mighty west—not so much with any idea of securing a fortune as with the hope of making an honorable living.

I became a reporter, and advanced slowly, continuing the acquirement of a liberal education in the greatest of schools, a daily newspaper office, and adding from month to month and from year to year to the volume of my experience. When I became a writer of literature my commissions carried me to all parts of the country and to all parts of the world. For years I have had no settled place of abode. It might have been New York yesterday, San Francisco the next week, the South Sea Islands the next month, Paris, London or Berlin the next year.

I have many good friends and many hundreds of pleasant acquaintances scattered throughout the earth, but never since I left the old New England village have I had a home, and it has been many a long year since there was a home for me even in the old village!

All this I tell you because I want to say that it would have been scarcely possible for me to have received kinder treatment in my own home, if I had one, than I have received here, from the first.

And yet, since recovering consciousness yesterday, I have noticed a change for the better, where I did not believe such a change could be possible.

Shortly after the faintness overcame me, just as the stenographer had closed her book, three evenings ago, I experienced a strange sensation. I was being carried through the clouds, the world appearing like a checker-board of green and yellow squares below. Suddenly I was lowered—lowered—lowered—to the bottom of a mine, I thought, and then—but, of course, it was one of those strange hallucinations which accompany fevers—I felt the softest, warmest, tenderest hand on the back of mine, resting as Helen's had rested there the evening on the canal; that night on the train, and many times afterward! And then, stranger still, I could feel the warmth of her face—so close it seemed to be to mine—and her lips touching my forehead.

But it is not of my dreams I wish to talk, for they can have no interest for you, though I should like to dwell upon some I have had lately.

My wound is dressed as it has never been dressed before. The whole method of nursing me seems to have been changed. The pillows and the mattress are softer. I lie easier, and rest better. There are flowers now on

both sides of the cot—and, yes, a handsome music box on a stand at the foot of the bed! I am no longer in a ward, but in a large room, carpeted and handsomely furnished. There are pictures on the walls; but, best of all, the windows reach to the floor, and I can look out upon God's beautiful world again and see the buds just bursting on the trees, the grass just peeping through the lawns, after the long and dreary Chicago winter.

I am glad to be able to look out upon the world again—very glad and very thankful—but I have no wish, no desire; no, as God is my judge, not the least—to become a part of it any more.

I shall be more comfortable and more contented in this room, I know. I am instructed to continue dictating—the doctor thinks it will do me no harm, providing I do not allow myself to become overwrought, and providing I do not attempt to do too much.

When Helen appeared before me, pale and trembling, near the golden door of the Transportation building, that evening, and made her astounding request, she gave me but a mere outline of the situation in which she found herself.

After she became assured of my sympathy, she said, talking very rapidly:

“Mr. Powers, you once asked me to be your wife. You told me that you loved me—that you loved me passionately. I was very sorry for you then, because I believed you told me the truth. You looked it. While you were telling me of your love I wished, oh, how sincerely I wished, I could say that I loved you in return, and that I could be all—all that you wanted me to be. I could not do the one or the other. I would not tell you

I loved you, when I was convinced that what you asked was impossible."

She glanced to the right and left, nervously, and continued:

"Now I have come to offer myself to you."

I was about to interrupt her.

"No, not that, either. I have come to tell you that I will be your wife—some time, if God will it. I want you to marry me—to marry me without delay—but I want to become the wife of Henry Bolton!"

What did she mean?

"I want you to make a great sacrifice for me, and all my life shall be consecrated to you, Edmund, if you will make it!"

There was nothing I could say. I was still unable to understand the meaning of her words.

"Henry Bolton is dead—dead to his father, dead to his mother, dead to me, dead to all the world, Edmund, and I want him to live again in you."

"But, Helen——"

"You shall marry me—you shall make me the wife of Henry Bolton. You shall not be my husband—not for some time—if ever."

"You must explain, Helen. This is more than I can comprehend!"

"I can only explain that Henry Bolton is a disgraced, a ruined man. He can never hope to redeem himself as Henry Bolton in the eyes of the world. He has promised me—I have just left him—to go to a western town, under another name. He is educated, talented, and a graduate in medicine. I will provide him with an income until he is able to provide one for himself. He has sworn to me that he will never gamble again—that his whole life shall

be a changed one. He never would have gone astray, he said, had I been near him. I have given him money—I will send him more. He must never write to his father or mother, but I will write for him. They will think us married and living together. I will tell how well he is doing, and, oh, Edmund, my uncle will be so happy!”

“Why is it necessary that you should take this course, Helen—why is it necessary that you should marry?”

“Because I must send proof of our marriage to Boston; because this proof of our marriage will satisfy my uncle and make him happy; because—oh, there are other things of which you know nothing—of which I can tell you nothing now.”

I have gone over this scene before. I have told you how I hesitated. I have told you of everything connected with the day's events.

The Milwaukee Sentinel of the following morning contained this notice, under the head of “Marriages”:

BOLTON—ST. VINCENT.—At the residence of the Rev. Clarence Woolworth, 1729 Prospect avenue, September 12, 1893, Helen St. Vincent, daughter of Henry Francis St. Vincent, of New York, to Henry Bolton, son of Dr. William Bolton, of Boston.

On the same morning, Dr. William Bolton, sitting at his breakfast table in Boston, was handed a telegram. Opening it, he read:

Milwaukee, Wis., September 12, 1893.—Dr. William Bolton, Commonwealth avenue, Boston, Mass.:—We were married here to-night. See letters and papers.
HELEN AND HENRY.

On the evening of the 13th I received, at the Plankinton hotel, Milwaukee, a telegram dated at St. Paul, and reading:

Arrived safely. Will keep you fully advised of our movements. H.

One week later I read in the Minneapolis Tribune the following personal notice:

Dr. Henry Dalton, who has been stopping at the West Hotel for the past few days, has decided to make his future home in Minneapolis. He has taken apartments on Nicollet avenue, and will fit up handsome offices and consultation rooms. Dr. Dalton has studied medicine at American and European colleges, and comes to Minneapolis with the very best of recommendations.

Two weeks later, with Helen looking over my shoulder, and Mrs. Arnold reading by a cheery grate fire, in a handsome private parlor of the Hotel Ryan, at St. Paul, I was writing this letter to the one man in all the world in whom I felt I could place unlimited confidence.

My Dear —— Thanks for your letter, and thanks, a thousand times over, for the trouble you have gone to in my behalf. I am glad you saw the minister, saw the register, and satisfied yourself personally that everything was just as I represented it. Yes, I understand you. You would have taken my word for it. Well, that was not what I wanted. I want you to be able to take your oath, should occasion require, that the facts are precisely as I gave them.

I hope there will never be any occasion for troubling you in this matter again. You say you are willing to accept my assurance that it will all turn out well in the end, but that you would feel better if things were looking brighter for me in the beginning. This expresses your real feeling. You don't like the looks of the case as I have presented it to you! I don't blame you—much.

Well, my dear fellow, you would not understand it, I'm afraid, if I wrote for a week, for there is much I would be compelled to hold back, in any event. All I can say now is that I do not regret anything.

I have the young lady's permission to make you my confidant. She remembers you very well, and desires me to thank you for the pleasant things you have said about her. If you only knew her as I do!

Mrs. Arnold—you remember Mrs. Arnold?—her chaperon, is with her here.

I shall continue to write, of course, but it will not be possible for me, under the circumstances, to visit Chicago again for some time.

Destroy this letter! I beg of you to be careful never, no matter what may happen, to divulge what you know of that marriage, without my permission—or Helen's.

I know you are loyalty itself, but I want you to be more than loyal—you must be discreet. As ever, your friend.

EDMUND POWERS

By the way, I have written Inspector Henderson, and he may run up here. Do you remember how we saved Henderson's star and his reputation? I will tell you sometime what Henderson did for me. But he must learn nothing from you.

As I finished this letter and sealed it Helen said:

“Edmund, you are very particular about demanding discretion upon the part of your friend; are you quite certain you are discreet yourself?”

She was smiling.

“Why? What do you mean, Helen?”

“Oh, nothing. A bellboy has just brought up a card for you—that’s all!”

I must have turned red and white; I know I became hot and cold.

Helen was laughing now. She was becoming herself again.

“You needn’t look so frightened,” she said, “it is all over now. The bellboy knew your visitor—a reporter from the Pioneer Press. He probably wanted to interview you on the future of American literature. You had better see him. My dear fellow, you are loyalty itself—but I want you to be more than loyal; you must be discreet,” and she laughed again as she repeated my own words from the letter I had just written.

How sheepish I felt! Helen had told me that Bolton knew of our friendship, and had suspected more than friendship. He was insanely jealous of me, she said. Knowing, but forgetting that he was in Minneapolis, and knowing, but forgetting, that he was aware of Helen’s presence in St. Paul, for the purpose of being near him while he was getting settled, I had foolishly written my name in full on the hotel register!

He was not likely to see the name there, but he was more than likely to read it in the St. Paul or Minneapolis papers. So I had to exercise considerable diplomacy that afternoon, to say nothing of consuming considerable time, in keeping my name out of the local journals. Newspaper men of the right sort will always help a fellow creature in distress if he only knows enough to be frank with them. I told the truth in St. Paul and telephoned the truth to Minneapolis—that is, I told the city editors I

was in St. Paul on private business; that I would be greatly embarrassed if my name should appear, and, more than that, the appearance of my name in print just at this time might compromise a lady. There was an "Oh, yes, certainly, Powers; glad to oblige you!" with a smile, from the city editors of St. Paul, and an "Oh, yes, we'll see that it doesn't slip in!" with a gurgle, over the telephone, from the city editors of Minneapolis. The smiles and gurgles were disagreeably cynical, but my name did not appear. Yet it would have been just as well, perhaps better, had I taken no such precautions.

Bolton had telegraphed for and had received very promptly his diplomas from New York, where with other of his belongings they had been stored away. In a note to Helen he hinted at changing the names they bore from Bolton to Dalton, something he was qualified to do readily and skillfully, but she insisted upon his sending them to her at once. He must, she urged, having changed his name, submit to a legal examination and be licensed to practice as a "nongraduate" under the laws of Minnesota. He would experience no difficulty, as he was fully prepared to hold his own before the most exacting of local boards. She kindly but firmly demanded that he resort to nothing that had even the appearance of deceit or dishonesty. He followed her advice, not because of any high moral view he took of it, but because it suited the peculiarities of his case. The less said about colleges he had attended, the less said or shown concerning his past life, the safer he would be.

Helen never saw him after their parting in the Transportation building. A great difficulty was removed when Mrs. Arnold, for Helen's sake, consented to be the medium

of communication between them. If Helen could afford to be charitable, Mrs. Arnold could, and, besides, Mrs. Arnold respected and loved the parents of the young man. It was one of the conditions of the arrangement entered upon between Miss St. Vincent and Bolton that he should, under no circumstances, attempt to see her without her consent, and he was not to ask her consent within two years. The other conditions were simple. He was never to write to his parents nor to send them any message, except through her. He was never to write to her except through Mrs. Arnold, or some third party whom she would name. If he carried out his promise of reformation, a promise which he made her with such earnestness that she felt she had no right to doubt his sincerity, and conducted himself in every way as a gentleman should, as the son of her uncle should, she would marry him at the expiration of three years. He could trust her. She pledged him her honor. In the meantime he would be supplied with all the money necessary to give him a good start in life.

She did not deceive him.

“I have no regard for you now, Henry,” she wrote. “I believe you will deserve my admiration if you keep your promise. You will certainly have my respect, and I will become your wife. But everything I do now is for the sake of the Henry Bolton who is dead, and for the sake of my good aunt and uncle, who are living. They are very dear to me. If you wound them you wound me; if you offend them you offend me; if you break any one of your promises never expect to see me or hear from me again. But I will say a cheerful word at parting. I believe you will make a man of yourself. Ask God to help you, as I do.”

I saw this letter before it was sealed. Helen asked me to read it. When I had finished she looked at me expectantly.

"Bolton's reformation means, Helen," I said, "that I shall lose you forever."

"Well, Edmund?"

"I would rather give up my life than lose you."

She waited for something more. Her lips were parted as if trying to catch the words I was about to utter.

"But, my darling, the reformation of this man would be worth any sacrifice I could make."

I did not say this to please her. God knows I did not say it for effect. I can repeat it now, lying here for aught I know from a death wound inflicted by that man—I would give up Helen to save him—then!

"You are a good man, Edmund, and God will reward you! This is all I can give you—this and my love, Edmund," and she offered her lips for a kiss.

Mrs. Arnold was standing by my side when I released the dear girl.

"I wish you would kiss me, too, Mr. Powers," she said.

CHAPTER XII.

I can fully understand now the motives which prompted Helen to keep me in the dark with relation to almost everything that had occurred in Chicago previous to our meeting that evening near the golden door. She told me of Bolton's insane jealousy—how he had heard of our friendship before he left New York and how he had made inquiries which confirmed his suspicions after his arrival in Chicago. She told me sufficient regarding his wayward career to make it plain to me why the detectives were in pursuit of him that evening. She had been seen in conversation with him previous to his escape and it was supposed that she might in some way have been an accomplice of his. She would be wanted, very naturally, for the information she might be able to give concerning him, no matter how slight the relations between them.

I was pretty familiar with the workings of the police department. Three years as a night reporter had brought me into contact with almost every phase of criminal life, and the methods pursued by the police, or likely to be pursued by them in the present instance, were of such an everyday character that I saw nothing in them to excite either my surprise or my curiosity.

Henry Bolton was Helen's cousin and her old playmate, the son of the man who was dearer to her than any other person on earth, without any exception. That she should have shielded him, connived at his escape from justice,

thrown her protection around him, was not to be wondered at, and was not to be condemned. She could not have done less. Blood is thicker than water and the natural affections cannot be ignored by any code of morals devised by man. We feel instinctively, those of us who feel at all, that we have the right, not only to save ourselves, but to protect those who are near to us, and to rescue our friends in time of danger.

Helen was reluctant to inform me of all the facts. I had no knowledge of the real character of Bolton. I believed him to be a young man who had made serious mistakes, who had become a criminal, but I did not know he was a vicious criminal at heart. Helen's interest in him, in spite of the fact that he stood between us, made him an object of interest to me. She believed he could be reclaimed. I hoped he might.

But had I known then what I learned afterward—of the assault upon Mrs. Arnold and the negro, of his ruffianly and cowardly remarks at the foot of the stairs in Flanders' home, of the deviltry at the bottom of his soul—the pathetic scene in which I was the central figure, at the conclusion of the preceding chapter would never have been described. I would have—well, I must not become excited.

And I knew absolutely nothing of the brutal treatment which Helen had undergone at the hands of Flanders. Had I known of that! It makes my blood boil now to think of it.

“Mr. Powers, you know what you have promised the doctor.”

“Yes; give me a drink, please.”

"You are doing very nicely now, and you'll soon be well if we can only keep you calm. Talk about something pleasanter to Miss Hutchinson."

Miss Hutchinson is the young lady stenographer sent to me by Messrs. Thorn, Holbrook & Clements. These lawyers wanted my deposition. I wonder how they like it? Everything that occurs around my cot I understand is to be held entirely confidential. Miss Hutchinson takes down my words without comment.

What patient creatures these women are! If I ever become a rich man I will build some useful monument to the women stenographers and trained nurses of Chicago. Strike that out. No, let it stand.

Miss Hutchinson smiles and the trained nurse smiles. For the first time in months, I believe, I smile myself.

Miss Wilson is day nurse. She is the only nurse I see, for she never leaves me now until I am comfortably tucked in and asleep for the night.

From 9 or 10 o'clock at night until 6 or 7 in the morning there is a night nurse with me, but she has little to do but watch. In fact, whenever I wake up she is absent, and a male nurse is taking her place. All nurses are not alike, I observe. This night nurse is probably gadding about the corridors with the other night nurses, or else asleep in some vacant cot.

A male nurse fills in the time between 7 or 8 a. m. and 10 a. m., when Miss Wilson resumes her watch. I am always glad to see her come in—she brings sunshine with her—sunshine and the day's medicine.

"Haven't I seen you somewhere before, Miss Wilson?" I asked one day.

She was bending over the medicine table, and when she looked up with a very pretty smile, she replied:

“Perhaps, Mr. Powers! May be you will be able to remember—sometime.”

I had done no writing from the afternoon of Helen's appearance in front of the Transportation Building up to the afternoon I spent with her in the Hotel Ryan at St. Paul.

The greatest day of the fair was almost at hand, but how was I to witness the magnificent spectacle which was promised? Must I miss Chicago Day? Must Helen miss it?

We thought of it and talked of it. Helen St. Vincent was now Mrs. Henry Bolton. She had not as yet used that name, except in her letters to her father, her uncle and her aunt. She was registered at St. Paul as “Miss St. Vincent.” Her father, her uncle and her aunt were entirely in ignorance of Henry's present location, or of the name he had assumed. All letters for him, Helen had arranged, must be addressed in her care, and all letters from him in reply must pass through her hands. The present address of Mrs. Henry Bolton was St. Cloud, Minn. I had carried some of her mail to that place, and had brought some back, but Mrs. Arnold made regular trips. Later she intended taking a small house somewhere in the vicinity of St. Paul and Minneapolis, where she would await results.

She had drawn between \$5,000 and \$6,000 from the bank in Chicago and had opened accounts elsewhere under her new name. Her idea was that this amount would be sufficient to supply all of her wants, as she intended to live very quietly and meet Henry's demands as well for the next two years. As soon as

she was settled she would paint and write, perhaps, and secure an income in this way. She had forgotten nothing.

I knew something in a general way of her fortune, and I felt no delicacy in saying to her one day:

“Helen, suppose something should happen to you—you know what I mean? Don’t you think there would be considerable complication? Suppose, for instance, you should die!”

“I am glad you referred to this Edmund. If I should die Mrs. Arnold would give you a letter.”

“Suppose Mrs. Arnold should die?”

“Then I would have to get somebody else to give you the letter.”

“Suppose I should die?”

“Well, in that event, Edmund, the letter would reach either my uncle or my father.”

“Pardon me, Helen, but I want this off my mind. What would this letter do?”

“Now, don’t blame me, but yourself, if my answer causes you any uneasiness—will you?”

“No, I won’t blame you for anything.”

“Are you sure?”

“I am certain.”

“Well, there are others in our secret—others of whom you know nothing!”

“You don’t mean——”

“Yes, I do mean! In the event of my death, or in the event of my inability from any cause to act for myself, the law firm of Thorn, Holbrook & Clements, Chicago, has a power of attorney to act for me—to sign my name—you know what a power of attorney is?”

“Yes, I know, but when, how did you attend to that?”

“The afternoon of the day we left Chicago. It was all over in fifteen minutes. They had done business for me before. They knew what I wanted. They knew how to arrange it. If everybody only knew his business, Edmund, what a delightful world this would be to live in.”

Now, can you blame me when I speak of her as a marvelous creature?

After that conversation I could see no reason for feeling any uneasiness with regard to her affairs. In her amiable, unpretentious way she knew more about business in a minute than I ever expected to know. The way in which she had anticipated everything, and the manner in which she prepared for everything, likely or unlikely, to happen, made me blush for my own careless habits and my own want of forethought.

Well, she had everything in good shape—she had brought order out of chaos. Her father knew nothing of Henry’s downfall, and therefore had accepted the announcement of the marriage with some surprise at its suddenness, perhaps, but as a matter long since settled upon. He wrote Helen a tender letter, and hoped she would be very happy in her new life. Might he expect to see her soon?

Dr. Bolton expressed the greatest amazement, but uttered no word of complaint or commendation. If he had less faith in Helen’s judgment, he said, he should tremble for the future, “but with your good sense to counsel and your love to inspire him, Henry may” (he did not so far commit himself as to say “would”) “become a useful and an honorable man. God grant it. You have my prayers and the prayers of your aunt every hour of the day.” Further along he wrote: “Your letter contained some information that anticipated a statement, a

most offensive one, made by Mr. Flanders. It contains so many falsehoods with reference to you, my dear child, that I do not know how much to believe nor how much to disbelieve of his story concerning Henry. I have replied to him. There will be no further communication between us. Have no intercourse whatever with him or with—but stop; I am too hasty, Helen. I should mention a letter from your cousin Jessie—every word of which gives the lie to the allegations of her father. It was a simple explanation of your conduct, but a convincing one. Jessie is a good girl. She believes you to be with me now. For the present it would be as well not to undeceive her. Let us be patient. God will bless you for the sacrifice you have made, Helen. We will observe the precautions you suggest. All letters written to him, either by your aunt or by myself, will be sent unsealed to you. You are right also in your determination not to leave him for the present. If everything goes well we will visit you, but not for a time.”

* As I say, she had brought order out of chaos. If Bolton would only continue as he had begun all would be well—all would be well in every sense. For he had succeeded already in making many friends, and had been received into the best circles of Minneapolis society. This was due to his unquestionable attractiveness of person, his evident refinement, his pleasing address—his faculty for making friends. We saw his name “among those present” at various high-class gatherings—although he was a stranger in the place. He had youth, good looks, education, refinement—and money. These opened the doors for him in Minneapolis, as they will open the doors anywhere.

What I meant by "well in every sense" was this: The thought crossed my mind, and I have a suspicion that it crossed Helen's about the same time, that if Henry Bolton continued as he had begun in Minncapolis—well, if he continued as he had begun, everything was possible! He would not see Helen for two years. Two years is a very long time. The young women of Minneapolis are pretty. Some of them are prettier than others. Henry did not love Helen—he had never loved her except as a brother loves a sister, or, perhaps, as a cousin loves a cousin. There was no depth of love, no passion, in his heart for her. He wanted to marry her now because there was a barrier in the way, or because he had never fallen in love with any other woman.

You must remember that I was not considering him at all as the coward who had insulted her, for I knew nothing of the insult. Helen knew far better than I that Henry Bolton did not love her. In her heart she despised him. To go back to my original proposition, if Bolton would only continue as he had begun, the chances were that he would never ask Helen to keep her promise.

So things were beginning to look brighter again—brighter for Helen and brighter for me, though heaven knows I had but the most vague ideas as to the future then, and trusted everything to providence—and to her! There was no occasion for prolonging her stay in St. Paul, at any rate. She had done everything that could be done for the present, and she had planned everything that could be planned for the future.

We talked about Chicago Day, and when we were not talking about it we were thinking about it. Helen understood that I was anxious to see the fair again, and to see it on the greatest day of its existence, so we decided

finally that together we would take one more look at the dream city, where our love was born; that we should behold it at the very height of its glory, and then say farewell to it forever!

I did not know of the misgivings that were in the dear girl's mind just then. As to myself, I only saw one danger—the danger of meeting Jennings. There was just the slightest possibility that some of the detectives who had a description of Helen in their mind might cause us annoyance. But I banished all fear of this kind when I thought of Henderson and the ease with which he might rescue her from any unpleasant position. I mentioned these two dangers to Helen, but she only said:

“There will be hundreds of thousands at the fair that day, Edmund; we will be as grains of sand in the desert. We will be lost in the multitude.”

This seemed to settle the matter, but she added, after a slight pause:

“You will have plenty of time to receive a reply from your friend, Inspector Henderson. Tell him what you propose and we will do as he advises.”

That reminded me of my promise to the inspector—a promise I was not able to keep up to this time, because I was in no position to make the explanation he was entitled to. Nor was I in a position to make it now, for I was really only in possession of facts enough to enable me to send him a statement that must appear absurd upon its face, and I could not afford to have my old friend think for one moment I was trifling with him. I had written him a brief letter of thanks, as you know.

Helen saw I was meditating seriously, and she asked:

“What are you thinking about, Edmund?” I told her exactly what I was thinking about.

Mrs. Arnold, who was sitting near one of the windows, doing some fancy work, looked up and exchanged glances with Helen.

There was silence for a few minutes. Mrs. Arnold left the parlor, and Helen, explaining that she would return at once, followed.

They were absent some time, however. When Helen had again taken a chair near me she talked of the beautiful autumn climate of the northwest, of the wonderful beauty of the sky, of the glorious sunsets, and of other things entirely foreign to the subject we had up before she left the room; but I had learned to read her, and could see that she was simply struggling to calm her own mind so that she could express herself later on without disturbing mine.

For I had conjectured that she and Mrs. Arnold must have had a serious talk during their absence. Helen's face did not betray any sign of it. She had re-entered the room with the sweetest of smiles playing around the loveliest of mouths, but Mrs. Arnold's face told the story. The old nurse looked disappointed, and just a trifle ruffled in temper.

I had rendered no assistance to Helen in her skirmishing movements. The climate was very nice, yes! The sky was beautiful, at times, yes! The sunsets were grand at this season, yes!

At length the expected happened.

"I have been thinking of what you said a few minutes ago, Edmund."

"What did I say?"

"Oh, about that explanation you promised Inspector Henderson."

"Yes?"

"Well, I will go to Chicago on the night of the 8th. You had better go on the night of the 7th. I think it would be well, Edmund, if you had a personal conversation with Inspector Henderson. It will be better to see him than to write, you know. You can arrange for a private interview in advance. I don't know what Inspector Henderson may be able to tell you, but I think he will give you a great part of the information you are entitled to. His statement will, at any rate, make the rest easier for me."

"You think Inspector Henderson——"

"I think Inspector Henderson is probably acquainted with all, or nearly all, of the facts, Edmund."

"Then he is the one to make an explanation—not I?"

She smiled and said, placing her hand upon the back of mine :

"You are a queer fellow, Edmund. Don't you see that what Inspector Henderson wants you to explain is—is the answer you gave him that evening when he asked you who I was?" and she blushed crimson.

"Oh, yes. Well, how in the world am I to explain that—satisfactorily, I mean?"

"There is only one way you would explain it, Edmund?"

"And that way?"

"Is truthfully!"

"Yes, of course, but I cannot tell him everything."

"No, he will not ask you—he will not expect you to tell him everything. You will simply tell him that you love me, Edmund! He will be satisfied with that. It will be plain to him that under the circumstances you could not have answered him in any other way. And he will not blame you. I know he won't. How could he?"

No, Henderson would not blame me—he would not blame me if he knew the woman I loved, even though I had told him a million falsehoods to protect her. What would I not do for her!

“Very well, Helen,” I said. “I will see him, as you suggest. That sounds like a telegraphic message, doesn’t it?”

This absurdity struck both of us in the same way, and we laughed over it.

“I mean, Helen, I will see him, as you command.”

“Now, Edmund, that word ‘command’ was entirely accidental, I know, but it seems to me I must have tried your patience and your forbearance a great many times. Without meaning to do so I am constantly telling you what you must and must not do. I don’t know how I fell into the habit, but it is a very bad one, and I must break it. You have done so much for me, sacrificed so much for me, that I ought to go down on my knees to receive commands from you through all the future!”

There was a tear glistening in her eye, but she brightened and continued:

“These troubles will pass away, Edmund; I know they will. Every night and every morning I pray that I may be able some day to show my gratitude to you, and I believe God will hear my prayer. I know He will, Edmund. And now I must ask you to make two more promises!”

“I will make you a thousand, Helen!”

“No, two will do; and they are promises which you will have occasion to remember. The first is: No matter what Inspector Henderson may tell you—no matter what, remember!—you must under no circumstances take a single step until you shall have seen me!”

“I promise, Helen.”

“You are impulsive, Edmund. I beg of you not to permit your impulses to lead you into anything you or I might regret in the future!”

“I don’t exactly catch your meaning, but I promise.”

“Now I will rest easy about that. The other is: That no matter what you may chance to hear, whether from Inspector Henderson or anybody else, you will listen patiently and make no denials until you shall have heard me.”

“It is harder to promise that, Helen.”

“Why?”

“Because I could not listen to anything—you could not expect me to listen to anything—that would reflect upon you in any way.”

“That is, for my sake you would deem it your duty as a gentleman to resent any reflection of the kind you mean.”

“Yes, certainly, of course, Helen.”

“That is precisely why I ask you to make this promise, Edmund. In the eyes of the world you are nothing to me. Your interference in my behalf would do me a thousand times more harm just now, Edmund, than any good that could possibly result from it. Why just think for a moment.”

I thought for a moment. Either as Helen St. Vincent or as Mrs. Henry Bolton she was nothing to me. To attempt to prove that she was something to me would place her in a terrible position in the eyes of her father, her uncle and her aunt, to begin with. It would expose our real relations to her cousin. It would expose the Milwaukee marriage—I never thought of it then as a fraud. The explanation we

had to give the world would be received with laughter. Nobody would ridicule it more certainly than Henry Bolton.

There was no way of obtaining a divorce. Whatever the scamp Bolton had been guilty of, he was innocent of all connection with what the newspapers and courts would pronounce a bogus marriage. All sorts of motives would be charged against both of us—it would have been an attempt upon the part of Helen and myself to hide a sin; it would have been an attempt upon my part to gain possession of her fortune, after gaining possession of her virtue. We had made a great mistake. While Henry Bolton lived she must be Henry Bolton's wife, in name at least—in fact, if——

Helen was right. I gave her my promise to listen to everything; to bear everything.

I was to leave St. Paul that night and was ready for my trip to Chicago. I had spent the day with Helen and Mrs. Arnold. That good woman gave us no latitude now. We talked in her presence without noticing her. She liked me. She told me as much. But she kept her post by the grate fire, or by the window.

It really didn't matter. See knew all our secrets. Helen would place her hand on the back of mine in the old sisterly fashion, whether Mrs. Arnold was looking or not, but that and the things we couldn't help saying to each other, were the extent of our lovemaking.

Once, while standing near the table in the center of the room, I put my arm around Helen's waist. She looked at me and removed it quietly, without a word. I felt like apologizing. It seemed to me that I had done a rude thing—that is, when I considered the delicacy of her position. If she were simply Helen St. Vincent,

I would have insisted upon my arm remaining there—but if she were Helen St. Vincent, she would not have removed it.

She was Mrs. Henry Bolton now—had married him by proxy. She was another man's wife! It was a difficult matter at times to remember this, or, remembering it, to appreciate the fine points involved in it. But it was not difficult for me to respect Helen, and I never intentionally gave her cause for even suspecting that I had the remotest desire of taking advantage of our peculiar relationship.

Well, I was about to leave for Chicago, and I had her promise to meet me on the morning of October 9, at the old trysting place, in front of the Transportation building. She had formed great plans. We would hire the gondolier who hummed Venetian airs, if money would hire him, and we would spend the entire day on the water.

So I shook hands with Mrs. Arnold and kissed her. And I shook hands with Helen, or rather, I held her hand, and I looked into her dark blue eyes, and was about to draw her to me, when she said:

“Wait a moment, Edmund!”

There was a half pleasurable, half melancholy expression in her face. She had taken a few steps backward. Her hands were behind her. Helen seldom fell into a pose that was not a graceful, though entirely natural one. She smiled lovingly as she resumed:

“Edmund, there must be no more of this. I need not go into particulars. For a long time to come we must be only the most formal friends. I would like to have it different—as different as you would have it, Edmund—but you know how we are situated and—it would not be right.”



ROBERTS & GARDNER, CAL.

"WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THIS, SIR!"

“No,” broke in her old companion, “it would not be right, Mr. Powers.”

This was the first time Mrs. Arnold had ever spoken of the relations between us. Helen looked at her, smiled, and went on :

“We must continue to be the very best of friends, Mr. Powers. I know you will always be near me when I call——”

“He will dearest,” interposed her old companion, who spoke without raising her head, and as if communing with herself.

“I know you will be my husband yet. When I go to you I want to go to you as perfectly clear in conscience as I am now, and I know you will accept me in that way.”

“He will, dearest, he will.”

I was waiting to bear what was coming, and half expecting it.

“I have thought of going to Europe for a year or two, Edmund, but that would not do, as you know. It would be impossible to arrange it. I must be near—near Henry. You have your profession to care for, your work to do. You musn’t neglect it. You cannot attend to your work and be near me. I see you cannot, not the way we are situated at present. But you must go away, Edmund; I need not tell you why, nor how sorry I am that it is necessary !”

“And not see you any more, Helen ?”

“There is no reason why you should not see me. If God so will it, we will come together again at intervals. Yet, until the way is clear for us, Edmund, the less we see of each other the better.”

“Why do you tell me this now, when we are to meet again so soon ?”

“So that when we meet again it will be as we used to meet before anything happened—as the truest and warmest of friends. You will have your thoughts and I will have mine—and I know mine will be comforting, no matter what may happen. We will have one more happy day at the fair and then we shall say good-by.”

She came closer to me.

“And, now, Edmund, we will part in the way I know you long to part, but for the last time—until we shall have the right to meet and to part in this way—”

She had not ceased to speak before her arms were around my neck and I was raining down kisses upon her forehead, her hair, her cheeks, her lips, and upon her beautiful eyes that were wet with tears.

And this was the last parting we were to have in this way. The morrow was to put an end to all our hopes and separate us forever.

CHAPTER XIII.

On my arrival in Chicago next morning I tried to find, by telephone and messenger, my friend, Inspector Henderson. I was glad to learn that he was absent from the city. He had been in New York a week; would not return for another week. It would save explanations just then. I was perfectly content with all Helen had told me. I did not care to hear any further explanations. I would rather not make any. If Henderson had been very anxious about the matter he would have sent for me. My letter, already sent, had told him enough. For that matter, I was going to New York the day after to-morrow. I would meet him there.

My mind was in no condition to think positively about anything. All I wanted was the most trifling excuse for putting everything off. Helen would be down to-morrow. She would tell me what to do. Wasn't she the most remarkable girl!

I had never been really on intimate terms with a young lady before, and Helen was a revelation to me. I suppose that the great majority of young ladies are revelations to the great majority of young men.

Now, there's Miss Wilson, my nurse! Just think of that pretty girl spending her beautiful young life in a hospital, waiting upon a fellow like me, who may never see her again after I leave here—if I ever do. Why, she's fit to be the wife of a prince, or, better still, the wife of the noblest man that ever breathed, as his natural

inheritance, the free air of America. She is as delicately formed as the proudest lady in the land could wish to be; refined, accomplished, doubtless used to the very best of everything, and deserving of the very best of everything.

She carries herself like a ball-room favorite, this pretty Miss Wilson. Of course, I have nothing to do but follow her with my eyes as I sit bolstered up with my pillows while she attends to odds and ends about the room, after the male attendant has done the heavier work.

She has excellent taste about little things, the trifles that go to make up the world a sick man may claim for his own from day to day, but it isn't so much the way she moves around, the most graceful way in the world, as the pure spring air and delicious country-lane sunshine that seem to envelope her.

There's a young Dr. Kellingwood who drops in here for a few minutes every morning. I notice that Miss Wilson is always glad to see him come in, and I think she is just a trifle sorry to see him go away. I have seen him follow her with his eyes around the room, and I am enough of a judge of men to know that his glances are respectful. If they were not I would put a stop to his calls. He really has no business in here at all, my case being in the hands of Dr. Belden, the surgeon, but he knows some people who know me, is interested in my case, and I cannot help saying he is a most agreeable fellow. Once in awhile he tries my temperature, feels my pulse, looks at my wound, and does other things to kill time. His real purpose is to see Miss Wilson. Neither of them can deceive me.

Sometimes he brings me a newspaper or a magazine, and sometimes he will read for half an hour or so, but

generally he has only a few kind words to say and he is gone.

Yesterday morning Miss Wilson came into my room looking bright and more cheerful than ever. She always comes direct from the door to my bed.

"Good morning, Mr. Powers," was her friendly greeting.

"Good morning, Miss Wilson," I replied.

"You had a splendid night, didn't you?"

"How do you know?"

"How do I know? Why, I saw the report, of course."

"Who makes the report?"

"The night nurse."

"What does she know about it?"

"What a strange question—who should know about it if she didn't?"

"Well, she must get her information somewhere else—from her deputy, I suppose, for she is never here when I am awake."

"Wasn't she with you last night when you awoke?"

"There was a nurse here, the young woman who sometimes relieves you, but she is not my night nurse, I know."

"How do you know?" asked Miss Wilson as she peeped into the bird-cage she had hung at my window a few days previously.

"Because my night nurse is rather tall and the one who was with me last night is rather short," I replied, and I noticed that Miss Wilson asked quickly:

"Then you have seen her?"

"Seen—"

"Your nurse; you said you had never seen her."

"No, I said she was never here when I was awake."

“Well, isn’t that the same thing?”

“No, it isn’t the same thing—how unreasonable you are this morning! I have seen her two or three times as she left the room, just as I opened my eyes.”

“Why didn’t you call her?”

“There you go again! Do you suppose I have been able to yell across this big room, and, besides, either the other young woman or Tom has been here to attend to me. Tom says she has several patients to look after.”

“Yes, she is kept pretty busy at night, sometimes, you know; but she is with you the greater part of the time, nevertheless, Mr. Powers. Wouldn’t you like a little music this morning? Here’s a new cylinder somebody sent you from the city.”

She placed it in the music box, moved the lever, and after the preliminary buzzing—was I delirious again!

No, there was Miss Hutchinson, waiting for me to resume dictation; there was Miss Wilson looking at me intently, and there was the music box in front of her, playing the sweet, soulful prelude Helen had given to my song:

“What is the air called?” I asked.

“I do not know,” replied Miss Wilson, but I have heard it before.”

“So have I,” and I turned my head on the pillow and closed my eyes.

Many and many a time had that song—its words and its melody—come into my mind. The tide had gone out for Helen—it was going out for me.

That was yesterday; to-day I must continue my story.

Helen would be down to-morrow, and Helen would tell me what to do. I would not visit the fair until she came,

I would keep quiet here at the Chicago Beach Hotel. Lake Michigan was lying before me, peaceful and grand. It was pleasant to sit out on the balcony and watch the bright steamers as they passed to and fro between the city and the exposition. It was pleasant to sit here and think and smoke—yes, and dream.

But I could not content myself there or anywhere else. The more I thought the more restless I became. My cigar went out. Realities took the place of dreams. I would not go to the fair, but I must go somewhere. Why not go to the Press Club? There must be considerable mail awaiting me there. Besides, I wanted to say good-by to a number of my friends, and I would find several of them there this afternoon.

So a hansom cab was called, and I was driven to the Press Club. I preferred the cab to the trains, as I was not over anxious to meet acquaintances.

In the office I found a bundle of newspapers and letters, and several cards, left by persons who had called, hoping to find me at the club. There were three cards from William P. Flanders, and a note from the same gentleman. Would I be kind enough to notify him by telephone where and when he might have the pleasure of seeing me? He would like to talk to me, he said, on a matter of a strictly private character, and of some importance to me.

While I was reading this note the steward informed me that a telephone message had come from Mr. Flanders that very morning inquiring if I had put in an appearance and saying that he would like to be informed the moment I arrived.

“You needn’t telephone,” I replied, “I will call upon him at once.”

Dr. Bolton's letter to Helen had given me a hint of a rather unfriendly correspondence, but I was not disposed to inquire too deeply into her family matters. I had never heard of an open rupture in the relations between Mr. Flanders and his niece. I presumed that it all grew out of Henry's conduct. I understood the independence of the young lady and realized how little comment it would cause in the Flanders' household should she at any time take a trip with her companion away from the city. I had asked her the night we left if Mr. and Mrs. Flanders were informed of her departure from Chicago. Her reply was:

"Yes; I saw Jessie before leaving and I have written to her."

The manner in which she spoke convinced me that the subject was not altogether an agreeable one, and I did not bring it up again.

I called at the house of William P. Flanders & Co., sent my card to the office of the senior partner, and was admitted without delay.

Mr. Flanders extended his hand and offered me a chair near his desk. He was all smiles and affability.

"I am pleased to meet you, Mr. Powers," he said, "and I am sorry to have put you to the trouble of calling."

He cleared away some papers which were scattered on his desk and continued!

"My desire to see you, Mr. Powers, arises from the fact that your name has been mentioned with regard to some occurrences of peculiar interest to me. I think I may say that what I shall communicate will perhaps be of importance to you."

I made no remark here, as he evidently expected I would, and he went on :

“You have had a slight acquaintance with a young lady, my niece, named Miss Helen St. Vincent, I believe, during the past year?”

I admitted that I was acquainted with the young lady.

“Now, in order that we may understand each other, I must inform you of something that occurred at my residence just about one month ago, and I will ask you to consider all that I may say to you as coming from me in the strictest confidence.”

I simply looked him in the eye but made no pledge whatever. I was not particularly pleased with Mr. Flanders’ expression nor with his manner.

“Returning home from a private entertainment one night about the time named,” he went on, “with my wife and daughter, and it being very late, I used my latch key, and we entered the house without ringing. Passing through the vestibule into the hall, a white figure at the head of the stairs attracted our attention. Before we had time to recover from our surprise we beheld, standing on the stairs, midway between us and the white figure, a young man, evidently in the act of descending, and whose form we would have discovered upon entering were it not for the dim light of the hall. The white figure proved to be Miss St. Vincent in her night dress. The man——”

“A burglar, I presume.”

“The man,” resumed Mr. Flanders, without noticing my interruption, “was undecided as to whether he should make a dash for his liberty, and his indecision gave me a chance to draw a revolver and point it at him. I have been out late at night a great deal during this world’s fair

period, and have made it a rule to carry a pistol. As I pointed the pistol at the young man, Miss St. Vincent begged me not to shoot him."

Mr. Flanders paused, expecting me to make a remark, but as I could understand why Helen should plead even for the life of a burglar I remained silent.

Mr. Flanders looked a trifle annoyed that I should take the matter so coolly, and turning his chair around asked: "Were you on very intimate terms with Miss St. Vincent?"

"What do you mean by that question, Mr. Flanders?"

"Were you on such intimate terms with Miss St. Vincent that she addressed you at times by your first name?"

I thought a moment.

"Yes. Miss St. Vincent and I have been very good friends for nearly a year. We were together a great deal. She has called me Edmund, and I have called her Helen, now and then."

"Very good. Helen, addressing the man on the stairs, after begging me not to shoot, called him 'Edmund,' and, appealingly, asked why he did not explain his presence there—No, no, no, Mr. Powers! I understand perfectly well that you were not the man."

I had arisen, and he requested me to resume my seat. He had misinterpreted my movement and my expression, and I complied.

"Scarcely had Helen addressed him before he began to descend the stairs. I was so astonished by the use of the name I had heard her speak frequently in connection with yours, and by the appeal she made to him that I let my arm drop. As he passed by us, and before opening the door, he said he regretted very much that we should have found him in a position so compromising to Helen; that

his name was Edmund Powers, and that he would make all the reparation possible. With these words he passed out. At the moment I was powerless to raise a finger against him."

Why had Helen exacted those promises? Why had she pledged me to make no defense of her, to make no denial on her behalf, no matter what I might hear? I was mystified, but not a doubt crossed my mind then.

"After the young man had departed we found Mrs. Arnold and my colored servant, Frank, lying insensible on the parlor floor. They had evidently discovered him and he had assaulted them to create the impression that he was a burglar. It is not necessary for me now, Mr. Powers, to go into all the details. I discovered three days later that the man who was on the staircase that night was Henry Bolton, Helen's cousin and affianced husband."

Mr. Flanders paused again. He looked annoyed. The matter did not seem to interest me, as he supposed it would (and as it really did), but he had his best points in reserve and, taking from a pigeon-hole in his desk a copy of the Milwaukee Sentinel, he pointed to the notice announcing the marriage of Helen St. Vincent and Henry Bolton.

Even this did not move me. I had now complete mastery over myself. There was a suggestion of surprise on his face as he continued:

"It would appear from this that Bolton had made, or was forced to make, the reparation he hinted at—the only reparation a man could make under the circumstances."

"Assuming this to be the case, Mr. Flanders, may I ask your reason for supposing that I should be interested in this affair, beyond regretting exceedingly that Miss St. Vincent should have become the subject of this very painful interview."

“You have not forgotten that she called Bolton ‘Edmund,’ and that he gave me the name of ‘Edmund’ Powers?”

“No, I have not forgotten what you have just told me, nor do I understand it; but you are satisfied, as you tell me, that I had no connection with the matter.”

Mr. Flanders offered me a cigar, which I declined, lit one himself, and proceeded:

“If your name had not been brought into the case again, Mr. Powers, I would never have sought this interview. So far it is a family matter—a very disagreeable one—and the least that could be said about it the better; but it has gone beyond me and you, and I’m afraid you will be greatly embarrassed and annoyed by the phase it has assumed.”

“I am not much of an actor. I have never had any great occasion to dissemble. Through my life I have tried to be frank and honest with all people, greatly to my disadvantage, at times. I could not help exhibiting outwardly at this point some sign of the agitation which had been gaining strength within me. Mr. Flanders was quick to perceive the change. For his own purpose he was desirous that I should be as cool as possible, and he hastened to reassure me that so far as he was concerned he had the greatest confidence in me as a man of honor and entertained no doubt whatever but that I had been used as an unconscious tool by designing, wholly unscrupulous and entirely heartless persons.

In support of this conviction, he said he would give me all the facts and allow me to judge for myself whether he had formed his conclusions too hastily.

Then he went into details, covering all the points in my narrative so far as he had any knowledge of them, from

the visit of Bolton to his residence, down to the assault upon Jennings, and the departure of the carriage from the Sixty-second street entrance, on that memorable evening.

I could see as he progressed that Mr. Flanders had formed certain theories, and that he was bound to make every circumstance conform to them. In this way he had contrived some very ingenious explanations.

As I recall his story now, it amuses me to run over the answers he made to the numerous questions I asked, and the numerous objections I raised.

It was plain that he felt neither friendly nor charitable toward Miss St. Vincent, although he made an effort from time to time to conceal his real sentiments. It was also plain that he hated Henderson. More, he did not believe I was the man who was with Helen in front of the Transportation building, nor that I was the man who drove away with her in the carriage from the fair that evening.

Helen's mistaken identification of me on the stairway he pronounced "a devilish inspiration which found an echo in the ready brain of her rascally cousin." He passed over Jessie's connection with the case lightly, calling her "a foolish girl who had been unwisely permitted to fall under the infatuating and pernicious influence of a natural-born adventuress, and I had to listen, and make no protest!

I would keep my promise to Helen, and hear this man patiently to the end, no matter what he might say.

He expressed the belief that Henderson from the start had intended to assist in the escape of Bolton.

"You can have no further interest in that young woman, Mr. Powers," he said. "She has deceived us all—her uncle, her aunt, my family, you! She is in many

respects a most remarkable girl. I am ready to admit that she is beautiful, talented, captivating, amiable, but she is an actress, a consummate actress, Mr. Powers. It is perhaps difficult for you to believe what I tell you, but facts are facts. I have discovered that she drew from the bank that afternoon \$5,840. She might have drawn a larger amount, for there is still quite a balance to her credit. I am satisfied a large portion of the amount drawn out was used to induce Inspector Henderson to lend her his assistance. There is corruption, I regret to say, in every department of the municipal government of Chicago, and Henderson, like the rest of our public servants, is ready to sell himself to the highest bidder."

It was too much to be compelled to listen quietly to this cruel aspersion upon the character of a man like Ike Henderson—my friend—a man I would pledge my life had never been guilty of a dishonest act! But what was I to do?

"If you have given me a clear account of the events of that afternoon, Mr. Flanders," I said, "I cannot understand how it was possible for Miss St. Vincent to have been aware that she should need the assistance of anybody before she drove to the fair. And admitting that she had such knowledge, where did she find an opportunity of communicating with Henderson?"

"The trouble is, Mr. Powers, you forget much of what I have told you. You forget how quickly and skillfully she managed this matter on the staircase. You forget how quickly and how skillfully she managed to communicate with Bolton. You forget how she tricked us on our way to the fair. You do not view Miss St. Vincent in the proper light. You think of her as an ordinary young woman. As a matter of fact there is no end to

her resources. She was on the alert. She suspected something was wrong when she left the bank, and she questioned her driver. Unluckily, I had asked him a simple question. He must have remarked that a carriage was following him. I have other reasons also, Mr. Powers, for believing that the driver gave her some information which put her on her guard, and the chances are ten to one she paid him well for doing her bidding."

Mr. Flanders evidently did not care to tell me what his "other reasons" were. I know what they were now, and so do you. The man who drove Helen that day, afterward told Inspector Henderson of the \$5 bill transaction.

"I learned," continued this business man, "that she was detained in the bank less than ten minutes. It was thirty minutes at least from the time she entered it until her carriage crossed the intersection of State and Madison streets. She was in a great hurry. She had to think and act rapidly. Now, where was she during, we will say, the fifteen minutes unaccounted for?"

I knew where she was. She had told me, you remember. But I could not say a word about this.

"I'll tell you where she was. She was in conversation with Inspector Henderson. I have made inquiries. He was called out of his office on that very day, at about that very time, by a telephone message. He returned in a few minutes and left again, hastily, saying he was going to the fair. I am satisfied in my own mind that he was in the carriage with that young lady when it passed us; that he assisted her in evading us, and that he left her at or near the Cottage Grove avenue police station. He was ready to receive us when we came along."

If I had not discovered weak points in all of Mr. Flanders' conclusions this statement would have seemed very plausible.

"Henderson's talk about wanting Bolton so bad was all nonsense. I suspected, from the tone of his conversation that something was wrong, but I did not imagine such a piece of treachery to the department and to the City of Chicago as he has been guilty of. He was very insolent to me, and very quick to side with a girl of whom he knew nothing and in whom he had no occasion to have such a friendly interest."

"If Inspector Henderson had desired the escape of Bolton, Mr. Flanders, why had he granted your request and deputized Jennings to make the arrest?"

"My request just suited him. It was exactly what he wanted to hear. And Jennings fell into the trap, too. Jennings is capable of good work sometimes, but he is a fool sometimes. The truth is, I should have seen that Henderson's reluctance to leave the case in Jennings' hands was all assumed. He wanted to shift the responsibility for the escape of Bolton."

"But, Mr. Flanders, he left everything in the most complete shape for the arrest. All Jennings had to do was to lay his hands upon the man he wanted. The mere accident of an ambulance——"

"No accident at all, sir," was the reply. "It was understood that no arrest would be made until my daughter and that young woman should have separated from Bolton. When Jennings saw the ruffian kiss Miss St. Vincent, and saw her accept his salute as a matter of course, he felt convinced that it was time to act. Henderson was near by and had his eye on our movements. The ambulance was part of the arrangement. Henderson signaled

to the driver. The ambulance passed by Bolton and quickly picked him up. That is all there is to it. It is as clear as day, Mr. Powers. I'm surprised that you do not see through the whole conspiracy clearly."

"But Henderson was at the service building."

"He was supposed to be there. When Jennings called to inform him of Bolton's escape he was told that Henderson had gone to the Woman's building."

"Mr. Flanders, you tell me that Jennings was satisfied it was not Bolton who was with Miss St. Vincent in front of the Transportation building?"

"He was satisfied of it at the time, but he has changed his mind. He is convinced, from all he has heard concerning you, that you would not have permitted yourself to become mixed up in this affair. He is convinced, also, that you would not have ordered the driver of the carriage to shoot him."

"To shoot him?"

"Yes. he distinctly remembers the order given the driver: 'If anybody interferes with you, shoot him!'"

"Oh, this is imag—this is hardly possible!"

"I place the greatest confidence in Jennings' word. This was his sworn statement, made at a time when it was supposed he would not recover."

"Has he recovered?"

"Oh, yes; he was only badly bruised. He is not as yet able to attend to his duties, however."

"Well, then, Mr. Flanders, I seem to be entirely acquitted of all connection with this unpleasant affair!" and I forced a smile.

"Entirely, Mr. Powers, entirely, sir! I think it but proper, however, in view of the fact that your name has been dragged into it, that you should be vindicated most

completely, and it was for this reason that I have been so desirous of meeting you."

"What else is there to be done, Mr Flanders? I certainly wish to avoid all publicity. Those who know me will not ask anything beyond my bare statement."

He replied, speaking with some decision :

"Very true, and I do not ask for any proof whatever. But as I said before, the case is out of my hands and out of yours. I think it will be necessary for you to see the superintendent of police."

"What for?"

"He would like to have you make an affidavit. You see this is becoming a serious matter for Inspector Henderson. The affidavit may not be necessary, for Jennings will at once, upon seeing you in broad daylight, be ready to take his oath that you are not the man. Still, to set all doubts at rest and to prevent all mention of your name in this connection in the future, you should call on the superintendent."

"Don't you think, Mr. Flanders, that it would be much the better plan to let the matter rest where it is? Think of the young lady, think of her father, her uncle——"

"Her uncle has written me a most abusive letter. He has gone beyond all bounds. The young lady, as you call her, has also insulted me—insulted me in my own house, Mr. Powers! You do not know these people. They have treated me shamefully, sir."

"Let me say, Mr. Flanders, that I have no desire to be mixed up in this case one way or the other. My relations with Miss St. Vincent were of the friendliest character. I owe her the kindest wishes. I would not do anything to cause her the slightest pain. I would not contribute in any way to her annoyance. I must beg you to excuse

me from having anything whatever to do with this unpleasant matter."

"You forget, Mr. Powers, that this young woman has shown no consideration for you; that she has only used you as a shield to cover her relations with Bolton!"

Oh! if I only had the privilege of choking him!

"You appear to forget, Mr. Powers, that this young woman is perfectly heartless—utterly without feeling. Think what she did that night to protect her lover at your expense. Think——"

"That will do, Mr. Flanders!"

I was on my feet, trembling from head to foot with passion.

Whether Mr. Flanders read in my face the impulse that was struggling in my breast I know not.

He rose and offered me his hand, saying :

"Very well, sir."

I dropped my cane as if by accident, and picking it up I stepped toward the door of his office.

"Good day, Mr. Flanders," I said, as I rushed from the room and staggered toward the street.

CHAPTER XIV.

Had a doubt of Helen's purity or loyalty crossed my mind during this conversation with Flanders? Well, I am not different from other men. Did a doubt linger in my mind? No! I had scarcely reached the street before I took from my pocketbook a miniature the sweet girl had given me, and one glance at her face was sufficient to dispel the last trace of whatever of evil there remained in my mind or in my heart.

What have I written?

I must qualify that statement, or, at least the concluding portion of it. I thought no evil of Helen St. Vincent but how I hated Bolton! Oh, the vile, vile wretch! Oh, the cowardly—oh, the treacherous villain! No promise made to Helen—no, not Helen herself could save him from my vengeance!

What time was it? Twenty minutes of four. A telegram would reach Helen in good season to prevent her from leaving St. Paul that evening. I would go to Minneapolis and I would——

“Hello, Powers!”

It was my old-time fr—it was the person who edits this manuscript who spoke.

“Hello, Powers—what's the matter, old fellow?”

I was staring at him wildly.

“Come with me; come with me. I've been waiting over an hour for you.”

“Waiting for me?”

“Yes, waiting for you. Lonely lingering here, my darling, waiting, love, for thee! What’s the matter with you?”

“Oh, nothing.”

“You have had an interview with our respected fellow-townsmen, William P. Flanders, Esq.? Do I seem to fasten my tendrils around the roots of the subject? Come, come! wake up! Flanders hasn’t drugged you, has he?”

“How do you know—what do you know about Flanders? How did you learn I was in town?”

“When we shall have had a consultation with our attorneys we shall probably make a statement to the public over our signature, but until then we must positively decline to be interviewed.”

“Oh, nonsense.”

“And the reporter, having been shown to the door, which was securely fastened behind him, bowed to the portcullis and withdrew. Powers, you look hungry. Let me buy you a meal. Come in here.”

We took chairs at the nearest table and the person I have alluded to ordered dinner for two.

“Now, explain yourself,” I demanded.

“Wait.”

He was examining my face closely and smiling in a most offensive manner from time to time.

The dinners were served.

“Now, explain yourself,” I repeated.

“Wait.”

He helped me and helped himself, and then began to eat. Those dyspeptics have terrible appetites. I became tired watching him and took a few mouthfuls myself.

“Tell me all about it,” he said.

“All about what?”

“All about your interview with Mr. Flanders.”

“Tell me first how you learned of my call on Flanders.”

“No, I’ll tell you nothing until you shall have revealed everything to me. If you refuse I will leave you to pay for the dinners!”

I told him everything that had passed between Flanders and myself—everything. He was the one man in the world who knew all my secrets.

“Why did you call upon him?”

I explained.

“Well, I learned from the steward of the Press Club where I would be likely to find you. Is that satisfactory?”

“How did you know I was in Chicago?”

“I saw that your mail had been removed, and I made inquiries. If that’s satisfactory, is there anything else you would like to know?”

I was silent.

“You could ask me,” he said, “why I thought it likely you might make a fool of yourself; ask it. I won’t be offended.”

“If you have anything to tell me,” I replied, hotly, “why don’t you tell it instead of playing the part of a driveling idiot?”

“Well, you are too ill-tempered and too insolent to be noticed. Why don’t you eat?”

There was silence between us for a few minutes. I laid my napkin on the table and was about to rise when he said.

“Wait! Don’t be in such a confounded rush.”

“I have business to attend to.”

“Yes, right here. Read that and tell me what you think of it.”

He handed me a telegram and added:

“I received that message in front of Mr. Flanders’ store—no, read this one first.”

He withdrew the telegram and handed me another.

It was dated at St. Paul that morning and read :

“Your friend is in Chicago. Will you kindly watch his movements and report? H.”

“Here’s the other; I received it in front of Mr. Flanders’ store while you were talking to the head of the firm.”

It read :

“Thanks. By all means. Do not leave him till I arrive to-morrow morning. H.”

“Now,” said he, “three hours are supposed to have elapsed between the receiving time of these telegrams. In order to make myself clear, I might say that I had knowledge of Mr. Flanders’ visits and messages to the Press Club. When I learned of your arrival and where you had probably gone I immediately sent a telegram to the interesting young person who signs herself ‘H.’ It was framed somewhat after this manner :”

“Mr. Flanders has made frequent inquiries for him. He is now at that gentleman’s office. Shall I seek him there?”

“Hence the second message. Hence my waiting and watching for thee. Hence the present delightful meeting. You are my long lost Powers! I will cling to you till the clinging vine arrives and does her own clinging.”

“No, you won’t. I will telegraph her not to come. I am going—I am going to see Bolton.”

“In other words you are going to make a fool of yourself.”

“Have it your own way.”

“I intend to.”

“What do you mean?”

"You are not going to see Bolton! You are not going to get yourself into trouble! You are not going to disgrace yourself; you are not going to disgrace the young lady! I have my orders and I will execute them. Look here; listen to me, Powers. You did me the honor to take me into your confidence, but you told me only enough to make me long for more. You and I have been friends for a great many years. Your statement was wholly unsatisfactory. I believed you to be the victim of an aggravated attack of infatuation. I will confess all—I have intruded upon your affairs, if you wish to call it an intrusion. I have talked with Henderson. He knew how you and I stood, and made a clean breast of it. I have also talked with a charming girl, named Miss Jessie Flanders. I have also heard the statement of a very intelligent young colored man, named Frank. The story told by Mr. Flanders, was in the main correct. As to his conclusions—well, let me summarize the testimony."

I listened to him. Henderson had related not only what he knew himself, but what Flanders and Jennings had told him. Jessie was not asked for details nor did she volunteer them, but she was pronounced in her belief that Miss St. Vincent was the dearest girl in the world. Frank gave a concise history of his connection with the case.

"There is no confusion in the minds of any of them," the speaker continued, "with regard to the question of identity. It was Bolton who called at Mr. Flanders' residence. Henderson had never seen him, but he could not be mistaken as to the person who was with Miss St. Vincent, and who left the fair with her that evening. Mr. Flanders is badly mixed on that point. His theory that

Henderson was in collusion with Miss St. Vincent is pure bosh. We know that. His belief that Miss St. Vincent had any previous knowledge of Bolton's arrival in this country, or of his presence in this city is absolutely without foundation. Her letters found in Bolton's trunk would be sufficient, if there were no other evidence, to disprove any such allegation. I don't know whether Flanders is a scoundrel or just simply a brute, but it doesn't make much difference. There is but one point to be considered, so far as I can see, and if that were settled to our satisfaction everything else would be plain. That point covers several other points of minor importance. Henderson believes and I believe that Helen St. Vincent is a pure young woman, pure in mind and body. We may judge for ourselves what Miss Jessie thinks about it. I need not inquire what your opinion is, Ed. The point is, does she really love you?"

"Why do you ask such a question? Don't you know she does?"

"Let us be reasonable for a few minutes. Don't flare up. I want to satisfy myself, for your sake, that she loves you, if I can. Does she love you, or does she love Bolton? That's the question. From what I have seen of her, and from what I know of her, I believe she is the kind of a girl who would sacrifice everything and everybody for the man she loves. What do you think?"

"I believe you are right."

"You agree with me also that she would allow no obstacle that she could remove to stand between her and the man she loves?"

"I agree with you."

"And you are firmly convinced that she loves you?"

"I am."

“Is this a conviction of the heart or of the mind? Do you believe, or do you know?”

“I know.”

“How do you know?”

“That is a question no man could answer.”

“It is a question every man should be able to answer before he trusts his happiness to the keeping of a woman. It is the most important question that can ever confront you in this life, Edmund Powers. There never was a time, there never can be a time, when your reasoning faculties might be of more value to you than at this moment. What I am trying to get at is whether you are being swayed by reason or by passion, by judgment, or by feeling.”

I was silent. What was he driving at?

“Let me ask you, what has Miss St. Vincent ever done to prove her love for you?”

“Oh, here! There are things, you know, a man doesn't care to talk about.”

“We may be frank with each other. She has given you soft looks, bewitching smiles, tender caresses, sweet words—she has probably told you that she loves you? Yes; well, in an ordinary case these would be sufficient, to begin with. I am talking now of your case, which is by no means an ordinary one. She refused your offer of marriage, in the first place, as you have informed me, on the ground that she was engaged to Bolton?”

“Yes, on that ground, and because of her high sense of duty.”

“Her high sense of duty did not prevent her from encouraging your love—now, don't be a fool; let us talk this matter over sensibly. Her high sense of duty, I say,

did not prevent her from encouraging your love, when you were struggling like a man to overcome it. I heard her sing that song of yours about the tide or something, and saw how she clung to you and smiled upon you that night at the reception, and, in view of what you had told me, I didn't like it."

He didn't know Helen as I knew her. We had been clearer to each other than brothers for years, so I let him go on.

"I will say nothing about the incident on the staircase, for I believe she was innocent of any wrong in that connection, but she did not set you right when she discovered her mistake. Why? Because she wanted to shield Bolton, the scamp who had by inuendo cast a slur upon her character."

This sounded disagreeably like some of Flander's remarks, but I let it go.

"We next find her shaking hands with this ruffian and even permitting him to kiss her, without protest. She showed him how to escape, at the same time appointing a meeting place in the Transportation building, where she spent the afternoon with him. Miss Flanders told me this, and more than this, Ed. Now, I don't want to be unjust to the young lady; God knows I don't, but she is nothing to me and you are everything. I have weighed this thing in my mind and it has cost me many sleepless hours. Your future happiness, your future life is at stake, my boy, and it is right that you should know everything."

I believed in him firmly and I could not question his devotion. He had proved himself my friend, not once, but a thousand times. There was pity in his eyes and in his voice when he said to me :

“Ed, that afternoon, in front of the south door of the Woman’s building, Helen St. Vincent offered her fortune to Henry Bolton and offered herself—proposed to go away with him!”

“It is impossible!”

“It is true!”

“Let me finish,” he added. “I know how painful this must be to you. I feel like a bearer of bad news, and I feel, somehow, that you will never forgive me for telling you this, but no matter. We next find her asking you to do a dishonorable thing. Keep quiet! If she were a silly, sentimental girl there would have been some excuse for it, but Helen St. Vincent, we know, is a young woman of rare intelligence and good sense. Love is blind, unthinking, unreasoning, and you consented. The sacrifice was yours!”

“She made a sacrifice also.”

“Yes, but not for you, Ed; not for you, my dear fellow. She made a sacrifice for Bolton!”

Helen’s voice was ringing in my ear: “No matter what you may chance to hear, whether from Inspector Henderson or anybody else, you will listen patiently and make no denials until you shall have heard me!”

“Is there anything else?” I asked.

“Just this. In return for all you have done she promises to marry you, providing Bolton is not reclaimed. If he be reclaimed she will marry him. You have learned to-day for the first time the real character of this man. You know that he is a cowardly and irreclaimable villain. The chances are that she will never marry him. In this event she will marry you. Are you willing—does your pride permit it—to enter into competition with this low-flung scamp for

the hand of Helen St. Vincent, queen, angel, though you think her?"

He was speaking to me now, as I never heard him speak before, and his voice had taken on an indignant, almost an angry tone :

" Assuming that she has been guided thus far, as your letter informed me (and I am ready to assume anything that will throw a favorable light upon her conduct), by a high sense of duty—a sense of duty so unselfish and so exalted as to overshadow every other feeling she is capable of ; assuming even that this sense of duty to her uncle, this all-powerful love for him, has driven her not only to the making of sacrifices herself, but to the demanding of greater sacrifices at your hands, is it possible that her eyes cannot be opened, that she cannot see how she has humiliated you? Can't she be made to understand that she does not owe to anybody on God's footstool a higher duty than she owes to you?"

" Before leaving her yesterday," I remarked, in the hope of bringing him around to a fitter understanding of Helen, " she said to me, ' you have done so much for me, Edmund ; sacrificed so much for me that I ought to go down on my knees to receive commands from you through all future time. These troubles will pass away, I know they will. Every night and every morning I pray that I may be able some day to show my gratitude to you, and I believe God will hear my prayers.' If you had seen her when she spoke these words, and had heard her speak them, you would never doubt her love for me."

" If I felt satisfied that she loved you as you love her I could almost adore her myself."

" I feel satisfied of it, and I adore her."

“I see you do,” he replied, smiling, “I see you do, and your great love for her, in spite of everything, almost convinces me that she must be as true as you believe her to be. I hope, Edmund, that nothing may ever occur to weaken your faith in her.”

“Nothing can ever occur to make me doubt her fidelity to me—nothing.”

“But you will not go near that fellow, Bolton?”

“No, I shall see Miss St. Vincent before I do anything.”

He took me by the arm and said:

“Then I’ll be equally loyal to the young lady. To-morrow I’ll deliver you safely into her hands, or arms, as the case may be.”

When we reached the appointed place next morning—the morning of Chicago Day—Helen and her chaperon were already on the ground. The immense throngs and the terrific rush at the gates had delayed us.

There was an anxious expression in Helen’s face as her eyes looked into mine and momentarily scrutinized the face of my companion, but it disappeared as he said:

“I think you will find, Miss St. Vincent, that your commands have been faithfully executed. We have dined together, smoked together, supped together, slept together, breakfasted together, and—we are here together. May I now have the honor of placing this young man in your charge?”

“You have been very kind,” she replied, “and I am under great obligations to you. Won’t you spend the day with us?”

“No,—thank—you,” he answered, pausing between his words, and he seemed to be lost in admiration of her beautiful face. “I have—that is, I think there are others

expecting me near the Cowboy statue, where I promised to meet them, and I am late. Good-by, Miss St. Vincent. Good-by, Powers. I hope you will have a very happy day!"

He had dropped Helen's hand and was leaving us, when he turned, saying:

"Oh, Powers, one moment please!"

I met him half way.

"If I were on a jury trying this case," he said, "and had heard all the evidence thus far presented, one-sided though it has been, I would give your Helen the benefit of the doubt and vote for her acquittal."

"Then you believe—"

"No; she must do something for you before I shall be fully convinced, but I would rather take her side and be wrong than take the other side and be right."

We parted. I have never seen him since that day.

CHAPTER X.

It seemed as though the floodgates of humanity had been opened upon the great exposition that morning. The deluge continued for hours. It broke into foaming streams at the gates, came down in noisy cataracts from the elevated railway, surged through the avenues like the mad Mississippi in a June rise; overflowed the grounds, inundated the buildings, carried away the levies, opened crevasses, tore down barriers, swamped and saturated everything—always finding at length the genial level that eddied into smiles, bubbled into good humor, rippled into laughter.

Oh, the sight was grand in the morning, magnificent at noon, superb in the evening, bewilderingly enchanting at night!

I have no hope of ever beholding a spectacle like that again. I have no desire to behold a spectacle which shall attempt to rival it. Whether it should fall below or rise above it, I would be equally disappointed. I would not take the world for this picture of the fair that is indelibly engraved upon my memory—this last impression!

It is a trite old saying that money will accomplish wonders. Money judiciously expended at the fair accomplished miracles. The things that at first sight seemed utterly impossible were made almost unattractively easy of attainment by the use—the judicious use—of the almighty dollar. It required a number of almighty



"IN THAT INSTANTANEOUS FLASH I BEHELD A MAN—A YOUNG MAN—IN THE ACT OF TOUCHING HELEN UPON THE SHOULDER"



dollars to bring about the results desired by Helen and myself on Chicago Day, but the most soulful and tuneful gondolier that ever looked like a brigand and sang like an angel, I knew from experience, was amenable to reason, and the gondolier who had hummed and paddled for us that glorious afternoon, when I told Helen of my love and learned that she loved me, and who could look beyond this earth into infinite space while he hummed and paddled, was not too unreasonable that morning, considering his opportunities for brigandage and all the other circumstances in his favor.

Yes, Mrs. Arnold was with us—Mrs. Arnold and a large and heavy basket. How thoughtful she was, always. How thoughtful women always are!

There was to be no more love-making, Helen had said, and whatever Helen said was law to me. We sat close together, very naturally, and now and then she would forget herself, and, in that sisterly way of hers, lay her hand on the back of mine, and I would forget myself and unconsciously place my arm around her waist. But we thought nothing of all this, for we were looking at the immense crowds along the avenues when we were not looking into each other's eyes. And I remarked that although the sweet girl did her best to appear cheerful, there was a shade of sadness in her smile, now and then.

Nothing was said of my interview with Flanders, nor concerning the part my old friend had taken, at her request. It was plainly Helen's desire that we should spend this day together as though nothing disagreeable had ever occurred, and I was content to float around the lagoons and canals with her—to bask in

the sunshine or to glide in the shadows, in blissful forgetfulness of everything else.

Such days do not come to any of us often in life, and they pass away when they do come all too swiftly. It was luncheon time, Mrs. Arnold said, before I realized that we had fairly begun to get settled, and it was luncheon time again very soon. The shadows had begun to grow larger and darker and longer upon the water; the bells in the turret, near by, were chiming their twilight airs. The golden glow of the setting sun had disappeared from the golden dome of the Administration building.

It was our time at the fair—Helen's time and mine—between the dusk and the darkness. We had always been more brotherly and sisterly, more confidential, more like comrades, during the fleeting minutes preceding our partings, in the old times—it seemed like years ago—before we had talked of love.

We were to part this evening, for how long a time neither of us could guess, but we had not talked of it through the day. As the darkness fell we became silent. We were thinking.

“You are going to New York, Edmund?”

“To New York first, at any rate. After that, well, perhaps, Japan. I want to visit Japan, if I can only make arrangements with my people.”

“In the event of your going to Japan, how long would you be likely to be absent?”

“A year, eighteen months—two years, perhaps.”

“You must not go to Japan.”

“No?”

“Would you like to do something for me?”

“Would I like to do something for you, Helen? What a question!”

"I mean," she said, and she seemed to be in one of her serious moods, "I mean, would you like to work for me—to write for me?"

Was there ever such an extraordinary girl! I never knew what turn she was likely to take. At present I did not understand her.

"Helen," I replied, "there is nothing in this world I would be more pleased to do. If I could only work for you always there would be a pleasure in labor I have never experienced as yet, much as I love my profession."

"Now, Edmund, you know very well you mustn't talk that way. Just think how ridiculous it is! You certainly understood me."

"Helen, I'm sure I didn't. You are a riddle, a beautiful riddle, and I hate to think that I must give you up in more senses than one."

"Don't talk about giving me up. Don't talk nonsense. Listen to me. You are my husband!"

"Helen!"

"In the sight of God you are my husband. We are man and wife. What has been done cannot be undone, Edmund. Marriages are made in heaven; they cannot be unmade on earth. You know my faith. I have thought over what I asked you to do and prayed over it, and there is only one view I can take of it, Edmund. You are my husband—I am your wife, before God and man!"

"But, Helen, you did not marry Edmund Powers—you married Henry——"

"Don't mention that name, please; don't mention it!"

"Don't you think we had better return to the hotel, dearest?" asked Mrs. Arnold, from the other end of the gondola. "You must be very tired."

“Not yet, aunty; not yet.” Then addressing me: “We are man and wife, Edmund. That is settled in my mind, but——”

“But what, Helen?”

“You are free to go or to do as you please. You must go away. I led you into a dishonorable, almost infamous thing, Edmund. I did a dishonorable, almost an infamous, thing myself, but I have not realized it until now—until now when I know you must go away. I have been blind. Oh, what can I do? What can I do to make amends for it?”

She was weeping.

“You must go away—you must go away, and you will learn to despise me, perhaps to hate me, when you realize, as I do, that I have tied a millstone around your neck!”

I thought of the remark my old-time friend had made the day before, as she continued:

“I took advantage of your friendship and your love, of your faith in me and your generosity. I compelled you to make a sacrifice for me when I should have made a sacrifice for you!”

“Helen, you are not yourself. You are overwrought, my love. The thought that you could intentionally think or do anything wrong has never entered my mind.”

She caught at the accidental and unnecessary word “intentionally.”

“I see, Edmund, that you have thought of it, though your generosity and your love for me would not permit you to speak. It has been in your mind; you couldn’t help it. You will always think of it. No, Edmund, I have not intentionally done you this great wrong, but I have done it, it matters not how. You will feel the

burden growing heavier every minute and hour while you are away, and you will despise me."

"Helen, do you think that I will ever cease to respect you; that I will ever forget that you were driven to the doing of this thing by the love you bore your uncle, and your high sense of duty?"

I was making blunders now at every step. Why had I used that word "respect?"

"No, Edmund, I don't think you will ever cease to—*to* respect me, for you are a man who would never, under any circumstances, forget to respect a woman. But respect is one thing—love is another."

I made matters worse by trying to set myself right:

"All this phase of the matter has been gone over before, Helen," I said. "I have heard the side of the case which you bring up now discussed from beginning to end. I heard it all yesterday from my friend. It would seem almost as if you and he had consulted before making your arguments. He even used one of the words I have heard from your lips."

"What did he say?"

How foolish I was to repeat it, but I did so in order to make a statement that would be emphatic and, as I thought, conclusive, and satisfying to her.

"He used the word 'dishonorable.' You know how good a friend he is, Helen. Had it come from anybody else——"

She interrupted me.

"He spoke as your friend—and he told you the truth!"

"But Helen, what he said, what anybody says, even what you may say, cannot impair my confidence in you or weaken my love for you. Is there anything I can do to make you feel this? You have married me as—as another

man; marry me now as Edmund Powers, and you will make me happier than I ever expect to be."

"No, Edmund, that cannot be. I am already married. I am legally married to you, and yet I am, to all appearances, married to my cousin. My, uncle, my father and others believe me to be the wife of Henry Bolton."

"Yes," I remarked, mechanically, "Mr. Flanders really believes you married him."

She did not notice my interruption, but went on:

"I believed I was doing right. I believed I was doing the only thing possible—that my course would make everybody happy in the end. I thought of my uncle's happiness. I thought of Henry's reformation. I could see that he had no real love for me. I believed in his promises. Something would happen to make me free and then I would be your wife. I had been worried so much for several days that I was incapable of seeing my way clearly, I did not think of the possibility that the news of our marriage would reach the ears of the man whose name I made you take. I should have had more respect for you. I should have thought of you and your future."

Something had evidently happened after my departure from St. Paul. What could have occurred? She had never alluded to Bolton in this manner before, much as she despised him.

"But," she continued, "I would not let you marry me now, Edmund, even though there were not an obstacle in the way! No, you must leave me. We haven't got much time; aunt is growing restless and she must be greatly fatigued, so let me say what I intended saying, at the beginning. I have a large fortune in my own right. I hardly know how to say it, but it is all yours!"

"Helen, you are not well—you don't know what you are saying!"

"Perhaps not, but I know what I want to say. It is all yours. Myself and everything I have got belongs to you. You have made sacrifices for me before—make one more—won't you, dear Edmund?"

I could only listen.

"Do not go to Japan—do not go so far away. Take a portion, a small portion, of what is your own—mind, Edmund, your own—and go to Europe, if you wish. I want you to do a service for me. Somehow or other you and I are related. I don't know much about it. I would like to know everything about it. Go to France and learn all you can about the St. Vincent's. Go to Ireland and learn all you can about them—and the Powers. Trace the histories of the families—for me. The work will interest you. It will keep your mind employed. I hope it will result in clearing up something that is now a mystery to me—and to you. No, never mind what. We must not talk on that subject now, or at any time. I have written for you all that I know concerning it."

She took from a reticule a large envelope, saying:

"Don't read what this contains until to-morrow, please—until you are on the train, and, Edmund, I beg of you never to forget the promises you made me in St. Paul."

"You were talking about this trip to France and Ireland, Helen," I suggested.

"Yes, what you do must be a labor of love—entirely. You cannot use the results to your profit, professionally, even if you cared to, for nobody would want them. You cannot afford, I know, to give your time to it. You have already wasted a great deal of time and neglected your

work on my account. You have made sacrifices for me, Edmund. Make one more—don't let your pride prevent you from granting me this request. Take a portion of what belongs to you."

"Nothing of yours can belong to me, Helen—nothing until you belong to me yourself."

"I never can belong to you more than I do now, Edmund, my husband!"

I was about to tell her that I could not think of complying with her request—that I would under no circumstances accept a dollar of her money, but I had made blunders enough already, and I was becoming cautious. She was very sensitive this evening—an accident in the use of a word had wounded her. I could see that. If I told her I would not accept the money to defray the expense of the journey and the employment she had planned for me—if I refused to accept it as a matter of right, as money that belonged to me because it belonged to her—she would take it, I was afraid, that I declined to regard our relations as she regarded them.

Helen was a Roman Catholic, as I have told you, and I understood the allusion she had made to her faith. To her a marriage meant something more than a mere civil contract—once married always married, for better or worse; no divorce possible outside of the court of death. She was my wife, I was her husband, in the sight of God! Should I attempt to weaken or change her belief? No! a thousand times no!

She held herself bound to me, but I must be free to go and do as I pleased. She had forced this marriage upon me, so she reasoned. Sooner or later I would blame her for it. Her pride would not allow her to accept me now on any terms. I could take her fortune but I could not

have her. Some day I might,—such things have happened—even if all obstacles could be removed now and another marriage ceremony were possible, throw the first marriage in her face. That would be terrible.

But in any case the obstacles could not be removed now and another marriage ceremony was not possible. We had dug a grave for our happiness and buried it in the darkness of night. Her father, her uncle, her aunt, and their friends; Flanders, Mrs. Flanders, Jessie—heaven only knew how many now believed her to be the wife of Henry Bolton.

To annul the Milwaukee marriage now meant what? A suit for divorce. Against me? No—against Henry Bolton, who, though guilty of everything else that was despicable, and capable of being guilty of anything, was at least innocent of this indiscretion. I cannot give it a harsher name, for neither Helen nor I had intentionally done any wrong. She had attempted, on the contrary, to do a righteous, a noble thing, and I had helped her to do it because I loved her.

And Bolton would learn for the first time that Helen was his wife and take advantage, in his ruffianly way, of her position and of his own. It would all result in publicity and scandal, in any event. Bolton might learn of the Milwaukee marriage in a thousand ways that we had never dreamed of.

And in the event of publicity and scandal where would I find myself? I hadn't thought of that before, but I felt certain Helen had considered it, and I thought then that this accounted for her anxiety to get me away from the country. The St. Vincent-Powers relationship idea had occurred to her as an excuse for making me the proffer of money.

Great God! Did she propose to compensate me for the sacrifices I had made? Did she propose to pay me for the services I had rendered her?

I do not need to tell you how easy is the transition from confidence to doubt—how quickly a single suspicion will open the way for thousands—how they multiply themselves, these bacilli of the imagination, into swarms and into myriads of swarms until they take complete possession of your brain.

How quickly, with what lightning-like rapidity everything that Flanders had said, and everything my friend had said—yes, even everything that Helen had said—assumed a different color in my mind. The staircase scene—in her night dress, calling Bolton by my name to save him—his vile remark at the door; the handshake and the kiss at the fair, and, worse still, her offer to go away with the scamp—her precaution lest I should punish Bolton—the promises she had exacted from me; the marriage, pronounced by my friend and even by herself, dishonorable, almost infamous; her desire to get me out of the country—was I a tool and a fool?

Could I help it? Could I control my thoughts? Was I to blame for it if my blood was boiling and my brain burning? It required but a few moments to bring about this change. I had never doubted her before. Now I was all doubt, all suspicion, all distrust.

And she was sitting there, her arm resting on the side of the gondola, her eyes observing every change in my face.

The Grand canal was as light as day. We were surrounded on all sides by craft of every description—processions of craft, representing the nations; steam launches, electric boats, canoes, gondolas, all brilliantly illuminated.

Laughter and song, song and laughter arose on all sides. The Court of Honor was a blaze of glory. Hundreds of thousands of people—of happy, joyous people, of proud people, for this had been the greatest day Americans had ever known; a day that proved, above all days, the unity and the fraternity of American manhood and American womanhood, regardless of distinctions—hundreds of thousands of people, I say, were now joining as if swayed by one impulse in singing "Home Sweet Home."

I was about to speak, but checked myself. How should I begin? What should I say? Would I tell Helen what my thoughts had been? Would I simply decline her proposition in such a manner as to let her understand that all was at an end between us? I could not look in her face without feeling that I was wronging her—and yet another consciousness impelled me to resent the great wrong that had been done me!

The voices of the multitude rose and fell, and in swelling volume and gentle cadence the last notes of the beautiful anthem died away, only to be followed by a tremendous cheer.

And Helen, turning to me and laying her hand on the back of mine, in the sisterly way I had come to recognize as a token of her heartfelt sympathy, said cheerily:

"Edmund, there is good in the great heart of humanity. What better evidence, than this spectacle, of the universal brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God, need anyone seek? Oh, I believe there is more, far more honesty than dishonesty, far more honor than treachery, far more love than hatred in the breasts of the people of all lands. All that is necessary is that they shall understand each other and work with and for each other. Just listen, Edmund! Isn't that glorious?"

The united orchestras and a chorus of 3,000 trained voices had taken up the national air "America," but half a million voices had carried the inspiring anthem away from the committee on music, and were guiding themselves naturally and rhythmically through the three stanzas. Cheer after cheer arose from the immense crowds, as the last note died away, and then came the calm that had followed every great popular outburst during the evening—a calm that was in itself thrilling and sublime.

And Helen, standing near the prow of the gondola, her hand resting upon my shoulder, was singing, "When the Tide is Going Out." The boats and floats around drew nearer and their occupants listened to the beautiful singer, whose voice was slightly echoed back from the Administration building. Her pose was a perfect one and she seemed to be wholly oblivious to the thousands of eyes which were upon her, and the thousands of ears that were strained to catch every note and every word. Her voice gave a passionate intensity to the melody as she sang :

Peaceful as a babe in slumber
Flows the channel from the sea,
Deeper than its fathoms number,
Is the love you bear to me.

There was repressed feeling in every note that followed :

Could I question God above me,
Could my heart find room for doubt,
I would ask you, Will you love me
When the tide is going out?

Hundreds in the surrounding boats took up the refrain :

I would ask you, Will you love me
When the tide is going out?

There was a general and a continued clapping of hands, not only over the northern end of the Grand canal, but extending to the broad avenues on either side. When she had finished the first verse I could feel that she was looking toward me for encouragement, but my eyes were turned the other way, and I made no sign. At that moment she appeared to me a cold, calculating actress. This was intended to be a master-stroke, but it had failed. Though there were repeated calls for more, she would not sing again. She took her place on the seat, by my side, and was silent.

Yet I would never forget that I had once loved her. I would try to remember her as she once told me I would remember the fair when it had vanished—when one was lost to me as irretrievably as the other!

No real harm had been done as yet, although Helen had seen the extraordinary change that had come over me and had been chilled by my manner.

I made no comment when she closed. I did not ask her to continue. I did not thank her for the effort she had made to please me.

"I think it is time now to bring to a close our last day at the fair," I said coldly.

"Yes, it is late, and we are all fatigued and out of humor, I'm afraid, Edmund," she replied, "but it is sad to think that this is the last of the fair for us!"

"It may be the last of everything for us," I replied, and I was going to call her Miss St. Vincent when something told me to hold.

"It may be, Edmund, but I hope not, I hope not!"

We were making for the landing near the corner of the Electricity building, just below the bridge.

"You have not given me an answer to my proposition, Edmund," she continued.

"I am afraid I must decline it."

"Very well, Edmund. Should you ever change your mind you will find in the envelope I gave you some memoranda and—and papers that may be useful."

"I leave for the east to-morrow, you know."

"Yes, Edmund."

"We may nev—we may not meet again."

She was silent. I gave her my hand as she stepped from the gondola. After I had assisted Mrs. Arnold and settled with the gondolier, we ascended the steps and unconsciously followed the avenue toward the north, going east by the Electricity and around by the Transportation building. We might have been landed near the latter structure, but walking, after a day in the gondola, was restful to us.

But there was something more than a desire for restful exercise impelling us at this time. We wanted to view the wonder of the centuries from our old point of observation.

We had passed out of the glare of the Court of Honor into the more somber shade of the northern division. The Wooded Island was a scene from dreamland. The lagoon swarmed with pleasure craft. Beyond and above the great roof of the Manufactures building, rockets were ascending and bursting into showers of indescribable beauty. Over by the battleship, guns were booming. In a momentary hush the music of Sousa's band playing "The Old Folks at Home," reached our ears faintly. Search lights were penetrating every corner of the grounds, crossing each other and dancing fantastically upon the white walls of the classic buildings.

For a second—it may have been the tenth of a second—we stood near the old trysting ground, opposite the golden door, literally enveloped, bathed, submerged, in a dazzling flood from the search light on the Manufactures building, and in that instantaneous flash I beheld a man—a young man—in the act of touching Helen upon the shoulder! The flash had gone and the man had disappeared in the stream of humanity pouring toward the exits, but Helen was trembling by my side.

“Now, dearest,” I heard Mrs. Arnold whisper, “Now, dearest, don’t give way—don’t Helen—be brave, my love.”

And Helen was brave—always brave—always, while consciousness was hers.

She made a great effort. I knew it. She was again mistress of herself.

“Edmund, we will say good-by here!”

“Shall I not accompany you to a carriage?” I asked, with surprise in my tone.

“No, Edmund, let us part here. Pardon me once more for referring to that envelope. All I have to say I have said in one of the enclosures. May God direct you and care for you always, Edmund—my dear Edmund, my husband!”

“Tell him, Helen—tell him, dearest,” whispered Mrs. Arnold, who was wiping her eyes. “Tell him, Helen, or I shall tell him. It is not right—It is not right! He has been so true and so good, Helen.”

“Oh, no, aunty, oh, no! I have harmed him enough. Why wreck his life? My good friend, my dear, good, generous friend!” and she was looking into my face, with an expression upon hers even more hopeless than that which had gone to my heart the last time we had met near this spot.

I had become a changed man during the past hour. Neither her smiles nor her tears could affect me now. The devil of doubt had full possession of me. I could not trust her, her words or her looks. If she were acting a part—why, then everything was explained. I could not even trust Mrs. Arnold.

Why did I not ask her to explain regarding the mysterious man, the touch on the shoulder, her agitation, Mrs. Arnold's appeal, her reply?

If you are a man—or a woman—of pride, of spirit and dignity, would you ask the person who had deceived, wronged, insulted you!—who had once used you as a tool, a plaything—a cat's-paw!—to explain any subsequent act? Would you lower yourself so much in your own esteem as to exhibit any further interest in that person?

How could I, Edmund Powers, who had given or who was ready to give everything I possessed in the world—ready to make any sacrifice—for the love of this woman—how could I, believing at last that she had played false to me from the beginning—that she had made a fool of me—stoop to ask her for anything, even for an explanation?

"That man was Henry Bolton," said Mrs. Arnold, coming close to me.

"Oh, don't, aunty!" cried Helen, appealingly.

"I do not care to hear you, madam!" I replied sternly.

"Oh, Mr. Powers, you must hear me. Do not talk to me that way. What will Helen do if you desert her now?"

"Miss St. Vincent," I replied, "has made her own plans. I have no part in them. I have never been consulted regarding them. One of her plans is that I shall go away—away from the country. I have done her a small service. I might do her another—and leave her. She has

generously proposed to compensate me for what I have done, and for what I may do. This proposition has led me to think. I have thought a great deal during the past hour. I shall go away. Miss St. Vincent need have no anxiety on my account. I shall go away, and never trouble her again!"

"Oh, Edmund, you do not believe what you have just said—you can't."

"Hush, dear. Let me talk to Mr. Powers," broke in Mrs. Arnold. "Henry Bolton has discovered—through Mr. Flanders—he has confessed it—all about the Milwaukee marriage. You must have been indiscreet in your talk with Mr. Flanders. Henry came to the hotel in St. Paul yesterday evening, just as we were about to leave, and secured an interview with Helen without her consent, but in my presence. He was greatly excited and told of a telegram of inquiry he had received from Mr. Flanders regarding the Milwaukee marriage. Mr. Flanders had not only discovered his location, but his assumed name, and the telegram informed him of the marriage notice which appeared in the Milwaukee Sentinel of September 13. Henry had found the newspaper on file at the Chamber of Commerce in Minneapolis, and had immediately come to the Hotel Ryan in St. Paul. At first he asked only for money to take him to South America, for he feared arrest, but as Helen yielded readily he grew bolder. He then accused her of marrying you in his name to deceive her father and uncle, and talked of a conspiracy, of fraud and of hunting you down and killing you. He wound up by insisting that Helen should recognize him as her husband and——"

"Mrs. Arnold," I interrupted, "I don't think it necessary to go into these details. There is nothing that can

excuse the fact that I have been kept in ignorance of every circumstance of importance to me from the evening of the day we left for Milwaukee. I am not an imbecile, or, perhaps, I am. I have learned of the meeting at Mr. Flanders' house, of the use Miss St. Vincent made of my name that night, how she met Bolton on the afternoon of September 12, how she gave him her hand, knowing that he had grossly and cowardly insulted her. I have heard of the kiss he gave her, of her own proposition to him that they should go away together. It seems to me that he must be of vastly more consequence to her than any other person on earth. I will say nothing of the use she made of my name, nor of the use she made of my friendship in this young man's favor. Forgetting my personal interests in the case entirely, it is plain that she has exhibited a regard for this young gentleman which forbids her being very deeply interested in anybody else. And, in view of all the facts, Mr. Bolton was not unreasonable in his demand that he be recognized as her husband, was he, Mrs. Arnold?"

I had spoken angrily and spitefully. Mrs. Arnold was about to reply, when Helen said, with a quiet dignity :

"I wanted these facts kept from you a certain time, for I feared you might kill him?"

"You were afraid I might kill him Miss St. Vincent; a very natural fear. You do not want him to be killed, of course."

"It is not Edmund Powers who is talking to me now," she said, calmly. "I will promise you to forget every unkind word you have spoken this evening. You have suffered much, and I cannot blame you for thinking ill of me. I have done wrong, very wrong; but I thought I was doing right. I had a false idea of my duty. Being

ready to sacrifice myself and everything I possessed to insure the happiness of my uncle, I was ready to sacrifice you, my dearest possession, in the same cause—always believing, Edmund—always believing that God would bless the sacrifice, and that in the end everything would come out right. It looks black now, Edmund—black for you and black for me, but I have not lost my faith in God. You have something that will show you how deeply you wr—how greatly you are mistaken.”

I wished from the bottom of my heart that I could only recall the words I had just spoken. They were scarcely uttered before I felt ashamed of them. I could not look at her without feeling that, no matter what appearances might have indicated, I was wrong—Helen was a pure, a faithful, a noble girl. But I had gone too far.

“I am sorry, Helen, for allowing a doubt to enter my mind. I am sorry for the words I have spoken. Forgive me!”

I had attempted to take her hand but she shrank away from me.

“There is nothing for me to forgive,” she said. “It is I who must be forgiven. I do not ask it now. I can ask nothing more. You gave all you had to give, freely, generously, trustfully. In return I have given you unhappiness.”

We had been walking for some minutes toward the Sixty-second street entrance. There were only straggling groups on the grounds now. The lights were being extinguished. Chicago Day had passed into history.

I insisted upon accompanying the ladies to a carriage. They were stopping at the Hotel Monroe.

Helen had preserved a dignified silence. Mrs. Arnold had not spoken again.

"You will write to me, Helen?"

"No, Edmund, we must not correspond. We must try to forget each other."

"You will not ask me to come to you in case——"

"No, Edmund, I shall never ask you to come to me."

"Than I am to understand that everything is over between us!"

"Always remembering that you are my husband—I am your wife! Yes, everything is over between us—now!"

We were outside the gates, and a coupe had driven up at a signal from me. Mrs. Arnold entered it, and as I assisted Helen from the sidewalk I asked, in the vain hope of even yet healing the wounds I had inflicted:

"Is there nothing more, Helen?"

"Nothing more."

"No parting kiss?"

"I am your wife—it is your privilege to take it."

"It is a privilege I shall never enforce, Helen; it must be granted, freely."

She was struggling with herself, this affectionate but proud young woman. Her face was white, so white that her deep blue eyes looked black in the electric glare.

"Tell the driver where to take us, Edmund."

Her face was now turned away from me, and, without offering her hand or bidding me good-by, she was gone—gone forever!

CHAPTER XVI.

I have a vague recollection of plodding through Washington Park that night; of finding myself walking amid the shrubbery on Drexel boulevard; of walking, walking, walking, between two interminable rows of houses; of the first faint hint of approaching day on the horizon of Lake Michigan, as I passed the old Art Institute; of climbing two flights of stairs and entering the deserted parlors of the Press Club; of descending to the street again; of calling a cab; of ordering the driver to take me to the Chicago Beach hotel; of going to my room and packing up my belongings; of ordering another cab; of driving around the world's fair district; of anxiously looking at my watch every few minutes and wondering how it was that the time dragged on so slowly; of reaching the Hotel Monroe, where Helen and Mrs. Arnold had stopped on their arrival from St. Paul; of learning that they had not returned last night, but had sent a messenger this morning early to pay their bill and to carry away their trunks; of hearing the clerk say that a gentleman who resembled me had made inquiries for them last night, of returning to my hotel and of falling across my bed, utterly worn out.

When I awoke I found a note pinned to the lapel of my coat. It was written with a lead-pencil upon a half sheet, evidently torn from a letter. I recognized the handwriting of my old chum. The note read:

"You're a devil of a fine fellow! Been out all night, eh? Sat in your room and heard you snore like a deckhand, for a straight hour. This is more than I would do for any other man on earth. Oh, if she could have heard you! Can't wait any longer. Don't dare to wake you up, you beast! Saw her to-day. Leaves by California Limited at 3:15 this afternoon. Doesn't want to see you, either. I will say good-by for you.

Now, seriously, try not to be a fool for once in your life. I know now that she is all right—that I was wrong—that you were wrong, Do as she requested. Go away! You can't see her! You can't see me! Never mind why. Take care of yourself, my boy. Trust her, trust your friends and—trust God.

There's a note at the hotel office for you. So long!"

I looked at my watch. Helen's train had pulled out of the Northwestern depot as I awoke!

I rang for a boy, and in a few minutes not one but two notes were handed to me. The first one read:

"My darling husband—

Yet I'll trust thee in the turn
As I've trusted in the flow,
Love like thine can never burn
With a blaze of fainter glow.
What tho' waters are receding,
What tho' shallows are about,
I will trust thee, love, unheeding,
When the tide is going out.

Good bye.

HELEN."

I kissed the little note fifty times and turned to the other. The address was in a man's hand, dashing and business-like. The inclosure read:

"Mr Edmund Powers. Dear Sir: You are a lucky man. If you had awakened while I was in your room I would have killed you—not because I have anything against you, for you have really been of great service to me, but because it would prevent you from getting in my way in the future. I have read your friend's note, and I agree with him that your snoring is intolerable.

He is mistaken, however. Whether you are fool enough to believe Helen loves you, after what you have learned, I don't know. She has been too much for all of you. She has played her cards well, for my sake. She is my wife now. Even old Flanders is glad I am happily married. I shall leave on the same train with Helen. For the sake of fooling that dear old friend of yours, and for the purpose of keeping the police quiet, it is understood, of course, that I leave to-night for South America. Everything is understood between Helen and me. There will be a happy reunion at Omaha to-morrow morning, or we may defer it until we arrive at Salt Lake City.

But at some point between Omaha and Portland, we shall sit down together and think of you. We shall think pleasantly of you, too,—as a man full of soul and sentiment and sweet little poetic things.

Now, let me give you a piece of valuable advice. Don't ever make the mistake of getting in my way. I will not be so soft-hearted next time. You know what it costs to come between a man and his wife. Helen is my wife. You helped the arrangement along very generously, and I have considered this in your favor.

Make no mistake. If you ever interfere with me I will kill you. Very truly yours,

HENRY BOLTON."

"P. S.—I have pinned your friend's note where I found it. If you can spare the time, tell him he will find it profitable to attend to his own business hereafter."

I again rang for a boy.

"Bring me a telegraph blank, quick!" I ordered, before he had time to open the door.

I could not await his return, and I followed him.

"Never mind," I shouted down the hall, "I will go to the office."

I descended on the elevator, rushed to the Western Union branch office in the hotel lobby and wrote:

"Miss Helen St. Vincent, California Express, Chicago and Northwestern Railroad:—Bolton is on your train. Leave it at any station and notify me. I will follow on next train. Answer.

EDMUND POWERS."

I watched the operator as he sent it. I told him I would pay any price to have it rushed. Would he ask the central office if it could be transmitted at once? He saw I was agitated, and he was obliging. The central office replied in a few minutes: "Message sent to nearest stop." It was an express train—"The California Flyer." The question was, when would the message reach the train? I had bothered the operator enough. I would ask no more questions, but wait. I had eaten nothing since 6 o'clock the evening before. I had not bathed, washed, nor even changed my collar and cuffs. I looked in a mirror, and saw that I needed attention. I was pale, haggard, unkempt.

I could do nothing 'till I heard from Helen. I wandered time and again out on the balcony—out on the lawn, down to the lake shore, but always wound up at the telegraph inclosure.

“No answer?”

“No, not yet.”

I bought an evening newspaper, tried to read it, threw it aside and went out on the balcony again. Perhaps the answer was awaiting me now. I was by the railing again.

“No answer?”

“Not yet.”

After a time the operator would raise his eyes, and, before I could speak, would answer the question he knew was coming:

“Not yet.”

“But there came a time when I received no such reply from the operator. He was taking a message. Without thinking, I leaned over the railing and over his shoulder. It was my answer!

“Edmund Powers, Chicago Beach Hotel, Chicago: Am aware of it. Do not annoy me with telegrams.
HELEN ST. VINCENT.”

I had read the message before the operator had finished writing the signature. I staggered away from the railing. He called me back.

“Here is the answer,” he said.

“Yes, I have read it,” and I took it from him.

“Twenty-five cents, please.”

Ah, Bolton, with all his cunning, had made a mistake. I threw a bill on the operator's table, saying:

“The young lady did not receive my message. She would have prepaid her reply. Send this:”

“Conductor, California Express, Chicago and Northwestern Railroad. Deliver at first stop. Note to Conductor:—Communicate this message to Miss

Helen St. Vincent, passenger on your train, and to nobody else. Previous message fell into other hands:

Helen:—Bolton is on your train. Previous message to you fell into his hands. Leave train at any station and I will follow on next train; or return to Chicago.
Answer. EDMUND POWERS."

The operator was now interested. He rushed the message; had it rushed from the central office and said:

"Be patient; we will have a reply soon."

He took out the toll for Bolton's reply and the cost of my second message, and offered me the change.

"No," I said, "it is yours."

"You must excuse me," was his reply. "I cannot accept it," and he looked offended.

I begged his pardon. I had forgotten that I was outside the exposition grounds. The hope of this country is in the proud-spirited and independent young men, whatever be their calling, who resent the proffered fee.

"You will dine with me?" I inquired

"Yes—when we shall have received the reply you are expecting."

The answer came this time sooner than I expected:

"Edmund Powers, Chicago Beach Hotel, Chicago: Party with gentleman and middle-aged lady left train at Dixon. Had through tickets. Trunks marked "H. St. V." Gentleman made arrangements with baggageman and passengers got off rear platform as train pulled out. FERGUSON, Conductor."

The operator seemed to pity me as I read this telegram. I pitied myself.

CHAPTER XVII.

I left for New York that night. On the train next day I took from my pocket several times the envelope Helen had given me and as often replaced it without breaking the seal. I was feverish and felt miserable. I could neither think connectedly nor logically. I was going to be ill; I knew, perhaps very ill. When I walked, as I frequently did, to the lavatory, to bathe my aching head or to quench my consuming thirst with large draughts of ice water, I felt dizzy in my head and weak in my lower limbs. The porter was attentive, as during my travels all over this country I have found the colored porters to be, when they see that one really requires attention. He furnished pillows for my head and did his utmost to make me comfortable.

Arriving in New York that night a carriage was procured for me. I could give no instructions myself. All I remember is that I was driven through the streets to a hotel I had never stopped at before. It seems that I registered and was shown to a room.

Six weeks afterward I was able to sit up for an hour or two daily. I had had brain fever. Skillful treatment and careful nursing had pulled me through. But I was only a mere shadow of my former self. It would be weeks before I could return to my work.

But I gained rapidly, and after two weeks of convalescence the doctor consented to my removal from the hotel. I wanted to get back to my old lodgings uptown.

Yes, there had been a number of callers. The news of my probably fatal illness at the hotel had been printed, and many of my friends had made inquiries from time to time. There were fresh flowers every morning, the nurse said, and offers of all kinds of assistance, but the doctor had been very strict. Only one person had seen me during my illness. The doctor had given his consent. Yes, a young lady who "wrote or something" for the newspapers. The name? Miss Hamlin. This young lady was deeply interested in my case. She dressed in black and might have been a widow for all the nurse knew—you couldn't tell always. She had seen me frequently.

Could it be possible that this was Helen! No; the description I gave did not fit my visitor. But I was still in doubt until the doctor told me that he knew the young person. St. Vincent was not her name. There were many young ladies in New York who interested or amused themselves, he didn't know which, in making sick calls.

He branched off upon other subjects, but I have never quite satisfied my mind about that young lady.

I had moved to my old rooms uptown and had sent for my mail. When it came I found the accumulation of two months—quite a bundle of letters. I remember looking at the bundle a long time before breaking the string that bound it. Would I find a letter from Helen? More than one—several?

I was still looking at the bundle and dreaming when my landlady came in. She had expressed great pleasure upon seeing me again and had taken extraordinary pains to make my rooms comfortable and cozy.

She told me that she had made frequent calls at the hotel during my illness. Upon learning, through the papers, that I was very low, she had offered her assistance.

The hotel proprietor had desired my removal to a hospital, but the doctor would not hear of it. There had been a quarrel, she said, but finally the whole matter had been arranged satisfactorily. It struck me as rather odd that the hotel bill should have been so small, and that the doctor, whenever I talked of paying him, had invariably smiled and put me off with, "Some other time, Mr. Powers."

I mentioned these things to my landlady, for we were on the best of terms. She was an elderly woman and I had been able at times to do her small services. Besides I had lodged with her for over five years, paying for the rooms whether I was in New York or off on some journey. She said, when I told her the amount of the hotel bill, that I had paid enough, and, as to the doctor, he had an immense practice and was in no need of my money. He knew that I must be rather "short" and besides that "I was good for it."

As to herself, the good woman went to expenses on my account that I felt she could not afford, but she would not listen to me when I talked of compensation for the beef tea, the ample supply of milk, the toast and eggs and all the little et ceteras that are so grateful to a person just recovering from a severe illness.

She left me after asking for the twentieth time if I were sure there was nothing more she could do for me, and I was again alone with my bundle of letters—without the courage to break the string.

Why should Helen write to me? How unreasonable I was to expect a letter from her now? Had I no pride left? Was I a mere puppet in this girl's hands?

Ah, well! The devil was putting such thoughts—such questions as these—into my mind. At the bottom of my

soul I felt that Helen was pure and honest and true. If she were not, then there was no purity nor honesty nor truth in the world.

There was her last communication to me—"My darling husband"—and her little verse. Yes, but with it I had pulled out of my pocket Bolton's infamous note and the two telegrams.

Bolton, I was satisfied, had written the first of these. When I came to my senses and could think and reason logically, the conductor's telegram needed scarcely any explanation. Some gentleman, probably a resident of the town where they had left the train, had assisted Helen and Mrs. Arnold. They might have made the discovery that Bolton was traveling with them. They might have told this gentleman—this stranger—much or little. All the average American citizen would have cared to know in such a case was that the ladies were in need of assistance.

It does me good to be able to say—for I have been in many lands and I know whereof I speak—that there is no country under the sun where a woman is more certain to receive at the hands of men, willing, ready, and respectful help in time of need, and no country under the sun where a woman is less likely to be mistaken in the man upon whom she calls for help than in this republic of ours, with all its easy-going ways and all its faults. Why should woman want to be considered the equal of men in a land where she is already recognized and honored and loved as his superior? I don't know. Do you, Miss Wilson?

"Indeed I don't, Mr. Powers. It was very nice of you to say that."

"How can I help saying it when I see you and Miss Hutchinson every day and——"

"Now, Mr. Powers, you had better go on with the story. You will spoil Miss Hutchinson and me."

"I couldn't."

"Well, you shan't. I am just crazy to hear you go on."

"All right. Go ahead, Miss Hutchinson."

As I was saying, the conductor's telegram was easily explained. Now that I was sane again I wondered how the mad notion had ever entered my head that Bolton could have been the man who left the train with Helen and Mrs. Arnold.

I broke the string and the letters fell apart. I swept them across the table, hoping to see an envelope addressed in Helen's handwriting. Not one. Then I examined each envelope separately. No, nothing from Helen—not a word!

Remember, I had been very ill. I was still weak and nervous. I leaned my forehead on the table and—Well, deserted, abandoned, desolate! She must have heard of my illness in some way. She must have heard that I was at death's door. Oh, Helen! Helen!

I ran through the envelopes again, and came upon one addressed in the handwriting of my old chum. I tore it open and saw that it was dated three days after my departure from Chicago. I read: "I saw your charming friend safely upon her journey. Don't you ever lose faith in her. Do as she has advised. There is nothing else that you can do now. Have no fear on account of that cousin of hers. He's fixed at present. Should he attempt any rascality, he will be fixed for life, or I don't know Ike Henderson. He has been given one more chance by Miss

St. V. Above everything else, don't be a fool. Go away and rest yourself. Come back when you feel that you are fit to live among sensible people. I leave here to night for the South. Expect to be gone all winter. Am going to chase alligators."

This would have been good news if I had not known just a trifle more than my friend knew about Bolton's movements after the train which carried Helen toward the West had left Chicago. The writer was plainly ignorant of Bolton's intentions or later movements. Some agreement had been entered into, of which Inspector Henderson had knowledge, involving the ruffian's departure from the country. But, as we have seen, Bolton had no idea of leaving the United States. The opportunity for levying blackmail upon Helen was too good to be lost. She was at his mercy, poor girl! and I could not stretch out a hand or move a finger to help her.

In running over the letters I had frequently come across a large yellow envelope bearing the name of the law firm of "Thorn, Holbrook & Clements," on the corner. This firm-name had been familiar to me. Perhaps the envelope might contain some information. I opened it. It was a very brief and business-like letter, dated at Chicago, December 16, 1893, and reading:

"Edmund Powers. Dear Sir:—We beg to inform you that Miss Helen St. Vincent, our client, notified us in October last to prepare certain documents in which you are interested. They were prepared according to her instructions with great haste. Other documents placed in our charge require your attention. We have learned of your illness. May we hope to have the pleasure of receiving a call from you at an early date?"

This must have some reference to the envelope handed me by Helen. I had never unsealed it. Where was it?

I was startled. What if it had been lost or stolen. I opened my trunk. There it was, where I had placed it, I

remember now, but vaguely, after reaching my room in the hotel.

I am ashamed to tell of the contents of that envelope! I would not tell of them were it not for her sake—for the sake of the noblest woman that God——.

“Very well, Miss Wilson. Won’t you hand me a drink? You are a dear girl.”

“Why, Mr. Powers, how you talk!”

“Well, I talk as I feel. You know I mean it.”

“Never mind what you mean, now, and never mind me. I’m just dying to hear what you found in that envelope.”

“How can I help minding you—looking at me as you are, with that tender expression in your face, and those lovely long dark eyelashes of yours moist with tears!”

“If you don’t stop I’ll leave the room, Mr. Powers. You shouldn’t talk that way—should he, Miss Hutchinson?”

“Oh, for that matter, Miss Hutchinson is as bad—I mean as good—as you. She is crying, too. If you don’t stop, I’ll leave the room. Don’t think I am saying pretty things just to hear myself talk, girls, and don’t think I am trying to make love. God knows I am not. I have no hope of ever leaving this room alive, and I have no place for love—for the love of anybody but the dear girl I so grossly wronged and for whom I would give a hundred lives if I had them.”

The first thing I took from the envelope was this—where is it? Oh, yes—was this cabinet photograph. Here she is, the sweetest girl that ever lived, as I have

seen her and idolized her hundreds of times at the great exposition, in her Eton jacket, shirt waist and sailor hat.

And, would you believe it? she had that picture taken on the very spot where we had so often met and parted, in front of the Transportation building, about a hundred feet north of the golden door. We used to stand here and look across the lagoon, or trying to catch the looks and words of the multitude that passed, sometimes attempting to guess the percentage of the visitors passing us who wouldn't exclaim:

“What a pity it is that all these buildings must be torn down!”

Or the other and equally familiar remark:

“Yes; I always take in the Midway.”

I can hear her clear, bright, girlish laughter now! Poor Helen! How happy she was then! This picture must have been taken after I confessed my love for her. I know it could not have been taken before, for she would have told me of it.

The next thing I took from the envelope was a notification from the Chicago law firm, that a power of attorney had been executed in my favor, by Miss St. Vincent. It was unlimited. I was at liberty to sign her name to checks and documents of all kinds. All that was lacking was the registering of my signature at the bank and with her attorneys, proper identification, etc. The notification closed by informing me that Miss St. Vincent had executed and deposited with the firm her will, making me her sole legatee. This will, I was informed, had been executed in conformity with all the requirements of the law.

The third and last inclosure was Helen's statement of everything that had occurred from the staircase episode to the evening of her departure from St. Paul. It was a

plain, straightforward narrative. She did not attempt to explain anything—if the story did not explain itself she could do no more. From this statement I have used many of the facts, which have been given you in their proper order.

Only one portion of it need be referred to here. She gave a complete account of Bolton's discovery of the Milwaukee marriage, his appearance at the hotel, his appeal for money, and his demand for recognition as her husband, which Mrs. Arnold had not been able to conclude. Helen, it seems, became indignant when he made this demand, gave him the particulars of the marriage, explained the motive of it and informed him, at the same time ringing for the hotel porter, that if he would not now consent to her conditions she would give him up to the authorities. She had lost all interest in him—she believed him to be utterly depraved and irreclaimable. She withdrew all promises. She told him she was the wife of Edmund Powers. The porter, a burly fellow, appeared, and she asked him to wait outside the door for a few minutes. Then she made Bolton a proposition: If he would keep his knowledge of the Milwaukee marriage a secret and leave the country at once, she would make him a liberal allowance annually. If he preferred to expose the secret of the Milwaukee marriage—well, there was the porter. She was prepared to go before the world with her story. He could take his choice.

He made a choice. He would go to South America. He would not trouble her again. He would leave that very night—or by the first train. Helen wrote this after he had left her.

The belief that he had gone made her feel for a time light-hearted on Chicago Day. It was not until the hour

for our parting came that she felt the full force of the position in which she had placed me, and could not repress the sentiments that had been gathering and gaining strength in her bosom for some time previously.

The language of her letter, touching upon this phase of the case, was much more hopeful than were her words that evening—but you must remember that she was speaking after a day of excitement, after a happy day, and at a time when I was about to leave her—when I was about to pass out of her sight, beyond her influence, never perhaps, to return!

Oh, what a brute I had been that night. Oh, if I could have explained next day—if I could only explain now.

In conclusion, Helen's letter said: "Now, Edmund, dear, you will not allow your pride to interfere with my plans for your—for our—future happiness. As we are situated at present, the farther we are apart the better. You honor me, I know, but you love me, Edmund. Let us remain apart until we have a right to be together. Do not feel that you are taking my money—you are doing nothing of the kind. Everything I have is yours; everything you have is mine. I inclose some memoranda about the St. Vincent-Powers family. Notice how I explain my queer conviction at one time that I had seen you before—also that song! There is something strange about the whole affair. I may talk to you about this to-morrow. But I am afraid of myself—I am afraid I will break down. Edmund, you will never speak of this to me, will you? I'm afraid I will not, at the last minute, let you go, my husband!"

And this explained, partly, at least, why she had put herself before me in the worst possible light that last night, on the canal. She was afraid of herself. She was

afraid she could not let me go. She knew I must go yet she wanted me to stay. She accused herself, but wanted me to soften the accusation with my love. She put herself in the worst possible light, hoping that my passionate affection would quiet her doubts forever.

I had attempted to soothe her for a time. Then the ten thousand demons that feed and fatten upon doubt and jealousy took possession of me and—well, her worst fears were confirmed. She had made a mistake. Some day I would despise her! I despised her now! Had I not insulted her—with my brutal doubts?

Christmas was close at hand. I left for Chicago and saw the lawyers. They could give me no information regarding the present address of Miss St. Vincent. They had not heard from her for two months.

I would grant this last request of hers, at any rate, and after making the necessary arrangements, as I have already informed you, I left for Europe, and in due course of time returned.

Thus it happened on that blustering March afternoon in 1894, I was standing in Dr. Bolton's consultation room, in his residence on the Back Bay, Boston, while the gray-haired, wrinkled and stoop-shouldered old physician was saying to his wife:

“This is Mr. Mason, my dear; now calm yourself.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

After a few visits to the residence of Dr. Bolton our relations became very easy. I regretted exceedingly that I was compelled to give him a fictitious name, but my intentions had been, as they continued to be, the best in the world. If I had given him the name of Powers—well, that would have upset everything. He had heard of Edmund Powers, and of the resemblance between Edmund Powers and his son. His suspicions would have been excited. There were too many unhappy associations with my name in his mind, for Flanders, I felt positive, had mentioned me. Perhaps Helen had. Perhaps others had. It would not do, at any rate, so I continued to be known as Mr. Mason. I had changed from the Tremont to the Vendome, a few squares from the doctor's residence, and was registered there under that name.

On my return from Europe I fully expected that a letter from Helen would be awaiting me. I was disappointed again. Not a line, not a word had I received from her since that afternoon at the Chicago Beach Hotel, when I found the brief message and the verse in this precious white envelope.

And over five months had passed away since then! Where was she? Was she living, or dead? I would soon learn, but I must be patient and careful.

Another month passed. It was April and the Public Gardens, dear to the heart of every Bostonian, were beginning to exhibit their spring attractions. I visited

them every day. Sometimes I wandered over to the common, across the grounds, where as a boy—a very small boy—I had played baseball with other small boys; toward the spot where the old elm used to stand, throwing its venerable shadow across the frog pond. Sometimes, not often, I climbed Beacon Hill, and once or twice I found myself, in imagination, sliding down the incline on a sled, as I had slidden many winters ago. There was my old friend Daniel Webster, and there was my other old friend, Horace Mann, standing exactly as they used to stand in the old days, when I passed the venerable State House on my way home from the Public Library, over, on Boylston street—so many years ago—with a volume of Oliver Optic under my arm and a breast full of ambition under my little peajacket. Those were the days when I felt certain, I, too, would become a great man and have a bronze statue erected in my honor. I was not quite certain whether I wanted the statue to be like Webster's or like Horace Mann's. I hoped the sculptor would make my legs straight and throw more life into my eyes. Nor was I certain whether I wanted the statue to stand in Boston, where I was attending school, or in the public square of my native village, out on the Old Colony road. There was an advantage in having it erected in Boston. More people would see it, and think what a great man I must have been! But, then, the boys and girls I knew and loved at home would not see it! I never thought of their growing old!

Dr. Bolton was talking to me one evening, about the middle of April, when he suddenly asked:

“Mr. Mason, did you visit the world's fair?”

I was going to learn something I had patiently waited for, at last! My heart was thumping, but I replied carelessly:

"Yes, doctor; I visited the world's fair frequently—almost daily for a time."

"I might have known as much," said the doctor thoughtfully. "Being a newspaper writer, of course, your duties called you there."

The good old doctor arose and walked the floor. He appeared to be musing. I was afraid to disturb him—afraid to break the thread of his thoughts. After a time he remarked:

"I suppose there were a great many newspaper people and writers in Chicago during the exposition. Yes, of course, there must have been. What an immense amount of literature it gave to the world!"

I would let him run on. I could see where his thoughts were leading him.

"You found many acquaintances there, very naturally!"

"Yes, I met a great many people."

"Newspaper people and writers, I suppose?"

"Yes, doctor, very many."

"Then, you visited the Press Club?"

"Oh, frequently."

"Did you ever meet a man named Edmund Powers?"

"I knew him—at least—I knew him very well."

"Do you know where he is now?"

"I couldn't tell you where is now, doctor."

I felt ashamed of this reply, but there was no other answer I could give him.

"He is a ruffian!"

"A ruffian!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, an unmitigated villain."

"Doctor, you must be mistaken. I cannot think that Powers ever harmed anybody, intentionally."

“He has harmed me; he has ruined a beautiful girl; my niece, a girl for whose happiness I would have freely given up my life.”

The doctor was excited. He left his chair and walked the floor of the consultation-room.

“I have never in my life,” said he, after taking two or three turns around the room, “been able to understand until recently how a human being could premeditate murder—not until recently, Mr. Mason. I have planned how I could torture and murder that scoundrel, if I could only get him into this room! I would give him a lingering death! I would make it unnecessary that he should be punished hereafter!”

This was awful—horrificing! What could have happened to transform this good old man into a demon? What could he have heard of Edmund Powers—of me?

I would not venture a remark. It required all my strength to be able to listen calmly.

“Helen St. Vincent,” he went on, “visited Chicago during the world’s fair. She had been for years engaged to marry my son Henry. I once thought, you remember, that you bore a striking resemblance to him. I have often wondered since why I ever thought so. There is really no resemblance. My mind had been greatly disturbed. I cannot exactly account for it. Henry had not been leading a proper life. I will be frank with you, and say that he had disgraced himself and his parents. I told him not to dream of marrying Helen. I would not permit it. However, he turned up in Chicago, and her great love for him prevailed over everything. She married him with her eyes open. I learned afterward that she knew all about his vices and—and his crimes, but she married him—to save him, to reclaim him for his own sake, for her own

sake and for my sake. She was a noble girl. It seems that she had become intimate with this fellow Powers before Henry's arrival. He exercised a great deal of influence over her, playing the part of a disinterested friend, and after the marriage followed her to St. Paul."

Great heavens! Where had he heard such a fabrication of lies?

"Henry was doing well in St. Paul, trying his best to be a man, and, according to Helen's letters, succeeding. But Powers had learned of my son's unfortunate but brief career as a criminal, and of some offenses charged against him which Helen, even by the liberal offer of money, was unable to condone, and, for the purpose of separating them, so that he might accomplish the ruin of the young woman, reported his whereabouts to the Chicago police. The result was that Henry was compelled to fly."

"The scoundrel!" I exclaimed.

"You are right," continued the doctor, misunderstanding me; "but I have not told you all. While practicing this treachery toward husband and wife, Powers was endeavoring to get the latter completely under his control. I have discovered that this man Powers is a relative of mine, and consequently of Miss St. Vincent. I knew his father and mother, most respectable people, very well. They are dead, and the family has become scattered. So far as I have any knowledge this is the first one of the family who has ever been guilty of a disgraceful act!"

"In what manner are Powers and Miss St. Vincent related?" I asked, recalling the hint of such relationship given me by Helen in her farewell letter.

"Very remotely," replied the doctor, as if wishing to make it appear that Helen could have nothing in common with me; not even a common ancestry. "His grandfather

and her grandmother were brother and sister, that is all ; but it is enough to give strength to a theory I have long entertained."

The doctor grew calmer for a few minutes as he ran over the outlines of what was evidently a favorite belief of his.

"From all I have learned of Powers I am convinced that he became aware of his relationship to Miss St. Vincent, and that he knew the value of even a distant kinship in the carrying out of the plans which he had conceived. He was possessed of that shrewdness which may be called and often is, in reality, genius. He learned of her family, of her independent fortune and of his resemblance to my son. He knew, instinctively, how to play upon her feelings, and from their very first meeting she appears to have taken a very great liking to him. This was due to the sympathetic strain of blood-relationship between them. Hypnotism and all the other isms of a like character may be explained upon purely natural grounds, and by very simple rules. It is this strain of blood relationship which brings about unaccountable attachments, mysterious friendships, love at first sight, and much of the so-called phenomena arising from the affections. We do not recognize the fact, for we lose all record of family descent, except in rare cases. We speak of people as being unrelated who, if the facts were known, are related, perhaps, physically, morally and intellectually, more closely than father and son or mother and daughter, who may not, from a variety of reasons, be related sympathetically at all. It was only a natural consequence that Helen should have fallen a victim to the snares of the scoundrel Powers. Her moral character was strong enough to resist him for a time, but she finally became entangled in his snare—and was lost."

One must be prepared for anything in the line of theory when one goes to Boston. I listened to the doctor, because I was afraid to interrupt him. How was Helen lost? What had happened? Where was she? These things I must learn. I could not trust myself to put an ordinary question.

“Henry fled from St. Paul, but for reasons which he explained satisfactorily, he lingered in Chicago on the day and night of October 9. He had not the slightest suspicion but that Helen would remain faithful to him. Wandering through the world’s fair on the night of the 9th he was amazed to run across Helen and Mrs. Arnold, who were accompanied by Powers. He was tempted to take the life of the man who had betrayed him, but Helen made an explanation which he accepted, but with grave doubt. After his departure from St. Paul she had become very low-spirited, and Powers had suggested that a trip to the fair would do her good. He succeeded in enlisting the services of Mrs. Arnold in his behalf also, and, although Helen had strongly resisted their arguments for a time, she finally gave in. She begged Henry’s pardon and he forgave her. He was a generous youth and likely to prove a too indulgent husband. What’s the matter, Mr Mason?”

“Nothing, doctor, only a slight dizziness—too much smoking, perhaps.”

“Yes, you must use tobacco moderately.”

This poor man—the victim of that unconscionable scamp he called his son—had my heartfelt sympathy. How could the foul wrong done him ever be undone? How could he ever be set right! The truth would hardly make his load lighter. Yes, it would—yes, it would! If Helen would only tell him all!

He handed me a little medicine in a graduate and a glass of water, and proceeded :

“ Yes, Henry forgave her, but he knew now that Powers was a masked enemy and a rascal. He told him so next day, and threatened to kill him if he ever crossed Helen’s path again. And he warned Helen against her false friend. They left for the west together on the evening of the 10th, I believe. Helen wrote from Lincoln, Neb. She told me that Henry had gone to Colorado and was trying to locate in one of the mining towns out there. She inclosed one letter received from him. It told her that he hoped to get settled in a short time. Then her letters to me were farther apart, and she said little of her husband. I noticed that one of them was dated the 25th of October and postmarked the 28th, but such accidents happen. People forget dates. A similar error occurred again. When such mistakes occur the third time and are consecutive, one is apt to be surprised. My wife and I talked about it. We agreed that Helen’s mind was disturbed and attributed it to some further misconduct on the part of Henry.”

This was about the time a young lady was calling at my hotel in New York! Could it be that Helen was forwarding letters to Mrs. Arnold, at Lincoln, to be mailed from that point, to her uncle? I believed this to be the case. I believed also that she had given her cousin one more chance—as my friend had written—and that he had again broken faith with her. I could listen patiently now to whatever the poor man had to say. I would soon learn where Helen might be found. I would go to her and bring her to her uncle!

“ I was amazed, one day, late in November, to receive a letter from Henry,” he continued, “ who was in Denver,

telling me that he had not heard from Helen for some weeks, and asking if I knew where she could be found. I still believed Henry had misconducted himself and thought that Helen had, perhaps, ceased to correspond with him for that reason. I did not write, but telegraphed him that on the day before I had received a letter from her dated at Lincoln, Neb. For some time I heard nothing. Then about December 10th I received a letter from Henry, who had made inquiries in Lincoln. This letter had proved beyond a doubt that Powers had led Helen astray. It seems that Mrs. Arnold had remained in Lincoln until a day or so before the arrival of my son. He succeeded by some means in getting copies of the telegrams that had passed between Helen and her chaperon. They related principally to the correspondence which was passing between them by mail. Mrs. Arnold, it seemed, opened my letters and telegraphed the substance of their contents to Helen, in New York. Through ignorance of the western fast mail service, miscalculations were made which led to the discrepancy between the dates and the postmarks. There were some allusions to Powers in the telegrams which plainly indicated that Helen was with the ruffian in New York."

"I could see that Henry was attempting to shield Helen, and at one or two points in the letter I became unsettled in my mind as to whether she had really taken a false step, but as I continued to read there was no ground for me to stand on. There was no longer any occasion for speculation; no longer any reason to hope. She had abandoned her husband for Powers!"

"How did your son make this discovery?"

"In the simplest manner possible. Helen had written a letter which Mrs. Arnold had not waited to receive.

Henry had thought it possible that there might be mail for Mrs. Henry Bolton, or Mrs. Arnold, or Miss Helen St. Vincent, at the postoffice. He had interested two or three persons in his behalf, among them the pastor of one of the leading churches, who wrote me a beautiful letter, speaking in the highest terms of the Christian fortitude exhibited by Henry during those trying hours, and met with little difficulty in obtaining possession of the letter I have spoken of."

I was all impatience. This letter would tell, perhaps, of the pleasure Helen felt in the knowledge that I was recovering. She might say something of her visits to the hotel.

"Did you learn the contents of that letter, doctor?"

"I have the letter itself. Henry sent it. Poor boy! It was a terrible blow to him. Yes, you may read it. It makes little difference now."

"New York, Dec. 11, 1894.—My Dear Aunty:—I think, with you, that we have been separated long enough. It is hardly worth while to attempt to deceive my uncle any longer. He will learn all sooner or later—the sooner the better now. I will never, never, never, aunty, have any communication with that man again. I am done. As to Mr. Powers, well, you know another marriage is impossible. He may still love me, but he is more likely to despise me for what I have done. You have told me a thousand times that no man ever respects the woman who offers herself to him—that the greater the struggle he is compelled to make, the higher the value he will place upon her when she is won.

Do you remember that last night at the fair? Do you think I can ever forget that? One I will not have, the other I cannot have. Come to me and then—let us go away from all of this.

A year ago life seemed so full of promise, of sunshine, of happiness. Everything was possible. Now, nothing is possible. I do not value life any longer. I would welcome death.

Yet I shall do one thing. I shall tell everything to my uncle. I shall tell him that I tried to love Henry—that I tried to be faithful to him. I shall tell him of my love for Edmund Powers. It will be hard for him to forgive me for going to Edmund when I needed help. Oh, how often has he told me of the pride of the St. Vincents—the honor of the men, the virtue of the women who have borne that name. With all his democratic ideas he is a believer in blood. You know he is. But, knowing all, he will take me to his heart.

Why have I never had a father? Why is it I cannot go to him now? He would turn me from his door. My story would drive him mad.

It is strange that you have never told me of Jessie's history before. I never suspected it. And yet she resembles her mother. We will try to be happy together.

It is late and I must close. Telegraph me exactly when your train is due, the route you take, etc.

You might rest a day in Chicago. Jessie and — will call upon you if you notify them. Lovingly, dear aunty, your
HELEN."

"You see," said the doctor, that this letter removes every doubt. And yet Henry said he could forgive her. If she would come to him he would forgive everything."

"You received Miss St. Vincent's letter—the letter she talks of writing to you?"

"Yes, I received it. Here it is. It has never been opened."

"What! you have never read it?"

"No, sir!" and the old man's eyes flashed with anger. "No, sir!"

He took a turn around the table and sat down again.

"No, sir! I wrote to her—wrote to her at the address given in Henry's letter. I tried to be charitable. I did not reproach nor scold her. There was but one thing for her to do. It was an alternative seldom presented to a woman who had erred. She must return forthwith to her husband. I promised that he would forgive her. She must devote her life to him, and prove her penitence by her devotion. Some time in the future I would see her, I could not see her now. She must not darken my door."

"Did she reply?"

"No, I have not heard from her since."

"Have you any knowledge regarding her?"

"She was living with Powers for a time. Henry discovered this. He has also discovered that she gave him everything she possessed—real estate and money. Her bank accounts were transferred to him. Deeds that

transferring her property in Boston, New York and Chicago have been recorded in his name."

We were silent for a long time.

"You do not know where they are living?"

"No; she is no longer in New York. Henry has searched for her there. His belief now is that Powèrs has deserted her, robbed her of everything she possessed, money and property, but, more than all, of her honor, and then abandoned her. It is the old story; the old story!"

"She speaks of a girl or woman named Jessie. In what manner is this girl interested in the case?"

"Oh, not at all. The discovery she made was just this—a young lady, supposed to be the daughter of a relative of mine, is only his adopted child. She is in reality the daughter of the Mrs. Arnold you have heard me mention. My brother-in-law was childless. Mrs. Arnold was a lady in reduced circumstances, who was engaged by me to nurse Helen. The opportunity for providing her child with a good home came along and she was sensible enough to take advantage of it. That is all there is to that. I sincerely hope the young lady has not been informed of these facts. I cannot understand why Mrs. Arnold should have revealed the secret to Helen."

I was burning to ask one more question with the hope of leading him on to giving me a piece of information I felt the need of very much. Where was his son now? Where could I find the shameless, cowardly liar? It was touching upon dangerous ground, and it was all the more dangerous because I felt my self-control slipping away. How should I ask it? Ah, yes!

"Doctor," I inquired, leaving my chair and walking to a bookcase, where, with my back turned to him, I



"MY, GOD! WHAT HAVE I DONE!"

Handwritten text at the top left corner, possibly a page number or date.

pretended to be examining the titles of a lot of medical works, "where did your niece reside while she was in Chicago?"

"At the residence of my friend and brother-in-law, William P. Flanders, a man I have greatly wronged. But he fell into a strange error. The story would be too long, and it would not interest you. He supposed my son had been guilty of—well, no matter what, now. It was a case of mistaken identity all the way through—a very remarkable case. He is now satisfied that he was wrong. He is convinced that Powers had entertained dishonorable intentions toward my niece from the very beginning. Mr. Flanders is now Henry's best friend."

"Then your son is in Chicago?"

"No, he has enemies there—two especially bitter enemies, both friends or tools of Powers. One happens to be an influential police officer—I don't know but that he is superintendent of the force now. The other is a newspaper writer. The latter has even of late made attacks upon Mr. Flanders, so that gentleman writes me. Mr. Flanders has many interests, and, having acquired great wealth, is, of course, subject to the vilification of envious and spiteful people."

"Your son, in the meantime——"

"Yes, Ellen; excuse me, Mr. Mason. I cannot say where he is just now," and the doctor went to his wife, who had opened the door from the hallway as I asked the last question.

He returned in a few minutes.

"Henry is here," he said, and bidding him good night I hurried from the house.

CHAPTER XIX.

From the Vendome that evening I sent a note to Henry Bolton, asking him to meet me at once and at any place he might name. I signed it "Edmund Powers." My messenger returned without a reply. "There is no answer," the young man who read my note had said. I immediately dispatched another message, saying: "Meet me at once, here or elsewhere, or I will call on you at your father's house. Answer." The messenger brought me back as a reply that the young man had asked him to say he would meet me at the hotel entrance inside of ten minutes. I was not armed. I had never carried a weapon of any kind. I must be ready to meet this ruffian on equal terms. It is not difficult to obtain the use of a pistol in a hotel office at night, if you are a guest in good standing and able to give a fair excuse. I borrowed a revolver from one of the clerks. I was going where I might possibly have use for it. I would return it before morning.

I waited impatiently for the ten minutes to roll around. Bolton did not come. I allowed five minutes more for a possible delay. He might have been held back by his father or mother. If there was a spark of manhood in him he would come. Fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, thirty minutes passed and he did not put in an appearance.

I walked toward the doctor's residence. Would I seek admittance? No. I must not invade that already too

unhappy home. I was passing the steps of Trinity Church, my brain full of fire, my whole being thirsting for vengeance.

There was a movement as of sliding feet behind me and before I could turn fully around I was felled to the sidewalk. But the blow had not been well aimed. It was intended for my temple. It had taken me in the neck. In an instant I was on my feet and my fingers were mercilessly burying themselves in the throat of Henry Bolton. I knew it could be no one else.

"You coward! You assassin! You cur!" I cried. "I will kill you!"

He was struggling—struggling with hands and feet, but I felt stronger than ten men then, and I choked him until he fell across the low coping of the green plat in front of the church.

I thought of the revolver. It would be a mercy to end the career of this villain. It would be a service to his parents—to Helen!

The street lamp on the corner showed me his face. It was almost black. He had ceased to struggle or to gasp. Blood was issuing from his mouth, his nostrils and his ears. My God! what had I done!

I loosened my grip and his body fell limp and lifeless over the coping, his feet touching the sidewalk, his head the grass. I had killed him! I was a murderer! There were footsteps approaching. I fled terror-stricken from the spot and as I ran down an alley near the church a bullet whistled by my ear.

I had reached this point in my narrative this morning when Miss Wilson, who was sitting by the side of the bed,

doing some fancy needle-work and listening, said in that restful tone of voice that mother nature has blessed her with:—

“I don’t think I would attempt to dictate any more to-day, Mr. Powers.”

“I am anxious to finish it, Miss Wilson.”

“You will have plenty of time.”

I saw Miss Hutchinson glance at her as she said this.

“I am afraid not, Miss Wilson,” I replied, “time is precious to me now.”

Miss Wilson dropped her work and bent over me.

“You are not feeling so well, are you?” she asked with genuine solicitude in her face.

“No, I am not. May I be entirely frank with you?”

“You may, Mr. Powers.”

“Well, then, to be perfectly frank with you, I am growing worse daily.”

“Oh, don’t say that!”

“Why attempt to hide it? You know it as well as I do!”

“But your wound is almost healed.”

“Which wound?”

“The wound in your side, of course.”

“Oh, that wound has never troubled me much.”

“Now, Mr. Powers, you will never repeat what I tell you—promise me!”

“Except to Miss Hutchinson. You know this is a clean confession, Miss Wilson.”

“Well, it can’t do much harm to repeat it to Miss Hutchinson—but you must never repeat it to the doctor.”

“Which doctor—yours or mine?”

Miss Wilson blushed to the roots of her hair.

“That settles it,” she said, petulantly; “I shan’t talk to you any more.”

She went over to the flowers, then to the bird cage; then back to the flowers, then to the bird cage again. Then she picked her sewing off my cot and flounced out of the room.

I was sorry. I had not intended to offend her. I would not wound her feelings for the world.

“She’ll be all right when she returns,” remarked Miss Hutchinson, who saw that I was worried.

And, sure enough, she came back in about five minutes, smiling beautifully.

“You didn’t tell me that great secret.”

She came to the side of the cot again, bending over me as before. What glorious brown eyes!

“Mr. Powers,” she said, “the doctor was talking about you in the corridor this morning. Are you brave enough to hear what he said?”

Her beautiful brown eyes were swimming in tears. For the first time since she has been here Miss Hutchinson laid her note book aside and rose from her chair. She, too, was leaning over me.

“Is it about myself or about—some one else?”

“It is about yourself and some one else.”

“What is it?”

“The doctor says that if that young lady could be found—if she could be brought here you might get well.”

“Yes; what else?”

“But he believes she is dead.”

“So do I.”

“Then you know what he meant?”

“Yes, there is no chance for me!”

“Don’t you think you could forget her, Mr. Powers? Don’t you think some other good young woman could take her place? Don’t you like me?”

"Yes, Miss Wilson; I like you."

"And I like you, Mr. Powers!"

"Thank you."

"Don't you think you could forget the past—for my sake? Think of the sacrifices she compelled you to make! Think of the suffering she has brought down upon you! Think of your work, your ambition—everything that she has caused you to abandon."

"Do you mean that you could love me, Miss Wilson?"

"I believe I could!"

"It would be love thrown away. I would make all the sacrifices over again. I would go through all my suffering over again. I would abandon my work—and how I loved it!—my ambition, everything, for Helen's sake!"

"But if you knew that she were dead; gone forever?"

"I would not profane her memory by—please forgive me, Miss Wilson, won't you?—I would not profane her memory by professing to love another woman."

Miss Wilson stood erect.

"Then you will not try to shake off this feeling—you would prefer to die!"

"I would prefer to die!"

She wiped her eyes, and, leaning over me again, said:

"I have become very deeply interested in you and in your story, Mr. Powers. I would like you to recover. You see the position I have placed myself in for your sake. You will respect my confidence, I know."

"I shall, but you must see that Miss Hutchinson does not report it. Have her keep all reference to it out of her notes."

"Will you do me a favor?"

"Any favor it is possible for me to do for you."

“Please dictate this conversation to Miss Hutchinson. I will make an arrangement with her.”

I suppose she wants a copy of it. Girls are so queer! I wish it could go into my statement. Helen might see it some day, if she is living, and it would convince her that I was true to the last. I am sorry for Dr. Kellingwood—very sorry!

I fled from the scene of my awful crime—because I could not look upon it in any other light. That night in my room at the hotel I expected every minute to hear a knock at the door and the dreadful summons:

“Come with me.”

Had a policeman knocked at my door that night I don't believe I would have given him time to speak. I couldn't help saying to him: “Yes, I am the man you are looking for; I killed Henry Bolton!”

I will not dwell upon this. I left Boston, after sending, a note to the old doctor, telling him that I had been suddenly called away. In New York I examined the newspapers carefully, but there was no murder reported from Boston. After three or four days I went to the Astor House and looked over the Boston newspaper files. In a paper of the second day following my departure there was a local item to the effect that a young man had been brutally assaulted and robbed by a footpad in the vicinity of Trinity Church. The injured man had been taken to the residence of Dr. William Bolton, near the scene of the assault, and identified as a stranger named Williams, who had just consulted him with relation to some throat trouble. Dr. Bolton had taken the responsibility of caring for the injured man, and had generously provided him with a room and a nurse. The injuries received were

serious, but not necessarily fatal. In a later paper I read a brief announcement of the fact that Mr. Williams, the man so murderously assaulted on his way from the residence of Dr. Bolton to the Providence depot, had fully recovered and had departed for his home in Wisconsin. He could give no description of his assailant and had refused to remain in Boston, or to assist the police in running down the ruffian who had attacked him.

It was plain, then, that Henry Bolton was either at large again or soon would be. So contrary are human feelings that while I at first felt relief that I had not killed him, I was now sorry that he had escaped me with his life.

In the meantime I had been making a vain search for Helen. I found the place where she and Mrs. Arnold had stopped, near Central Park, but found it only to learn that they had departed for Boston. I thought it so unlikely that they would visit Boston at the time that I believed they had given this destination simply to cover their real movements. Helen, I thought, must have been completely discouraged by the cruel reply the doctor had sent her. She believed, of course, that he had read her letter, and in face of the facts she had presented he had insisted that she must return to Henry and live with him as his wife! Unless she would do this she was never to darken his door again. After all her efforts—after all the sacrifices she had made to insure the old man's happiness, he had written her a letter which had practically cast her off. What could he be thinking about? Could he expect her to live with his son when she had explained that she had never married him? There was no mistaking his letter. She must return to Henry and prove her penitence by becoming a devoted wife to him. She must

do this horrible penitence for the sin of marrying me. Her uncle must be mad!

Yes, I could understand how the proud girl felt when she came to realize that all her efforts to do good had miscarried—had been misinterpreted, misconstrued; that her sacrifices were regarded as crimes; that the man for whose peace of mind and happiness she had given up everything—sacrificed herself and me—treated her as an ingrate, a disgrace to her name and a disgrace to him!

Then she must have thought of me and of my cruel words at our last meeting. I had made a feeble apology. I had attempted to explain. I had asked her forgiveness. She had forgiven me, but the wound I had inflicted, the terrible, gaping wound, was there. I had blunderingly satisfied her that her view of the Milwaukee marriage was the correct one. The more I pondered over it, she believed, the more I would despise her.

Poor girl! Poor girl! What would I not give to be able to prove to her now that an unaccountable fit of temper had taken possession of me that night, through no fault of mine, but as a result of the weak and unresisting condition of my mind. My sickness, following so soon afterward, was proof that I was not my real self when I entertained or gave expression to those unkind and unfeeling doubts regarding her.

Where should I look for her now? Would she go to her father? I called at his residence. He was not at home. Was there anybody who could speak for him? Yes, the servant said, the housekeeper might be seen. I saw the housekeeper. I was a friend of Dr. Bolton's. Did she know the present address of Miss St. Vin—of Mrs. Henry Bolton? No. Mr. St. Vincent had gone to Boston to see Dr. Bolton. Strange that I had not met

him? Not strange at all, as I left Boston several days ago. No, the housekeeper knew nothing except that Mrs. Bolton resided somewhere in the west. She had never seen much of Miss St. Vincent. The young lady had always resided with her uncle, and seldom visited her father.

Why had Mr. St. Vincent gone to Boston? The old doctor, I conjectured, had summoned him. By this time he, too, was acquainted with Henry Bolton's version of Helen's disappearance. What would the father of this almost fatherless girl do? Would he dismiss the whole subject and return to his books? Would he believe that his daughter had erred? How could he help it? There was nothing else for him to believe.

"Could I be informed in any way of Mr. St. Vincent's return?" I asked.

"You may leave your address. I shall inform him of your call. He does not see many visitors."

I left another fictitious name, and the address of my lodging. My landlady would be discreet.

I waited days and weeks for the return of Mr. St. Vincent, and I waited in vain. I called at his residence and had another chat with the housekeeper. Mr. St. Vincent had written that he would visit the west before returning. She might send his mail to the Great Northern hotel, Chicago, until further notice. Should there be any occasion for desiring to reach him by wire, she might telegraph him.

No, she really knew nothing of Mr. St. Vincent's motive in going west, except, perhaps, for the purpose of visiting his daughter, Mrs. Bolton.

I returned to Boston. There was no reason why I should hesitate about meeting the old doctor. I felt very

positive that Henry had not mentioned my name. He could not afford to connect me with the affair of that night. It would spoil his story. It was possible that he was still at his father's house. Well, if I should chance to meet him there, I would force him to tell the truth in his father's presence.

On arriving at the doctor's house I was doomed to experience a great disappointment. The house was closed from top to bottom. I rang the bell repeatedly, but there was no response. Although feeling positive that the place was deserted, I lingered about. I thought of the druggist who filled Dr. Bolton's prescriptions. He only knew that the physician and his wife had gone west. They would not return for some time, he thought. One of the domestics who had been in Mrs. Bolton's service for some years was now employed by the Peekwells, three houses above. She might be able to give me some information.

I rang the basement door-bell of the Peekwell mansion and found Maggie, who remembered me very well, and who could not think it strange that I should be so anxious to learn something about the Boltons, as I had been a pretty frequent visitor at the doctor's and she had often admitted me.

We stood in the basement hall, just inside the door, under the steps, while she gave me this information :

Henry Bolton had been assaulted by a highwayman and robbed of several thousand dollars one night, about the time I had ceased to call at the house. He was brought to Dr. Bolton's, because Dr. Bolton was the nearest physician. The robbery occurred in front of the church over there. Henry was believed to be dead for a time, but Dr. Bolton worked on him all night and brought him back to

consciousness. Perhaps I didn't know that Mr. Henry had run away with Dr. Bolton's niece and married her? Well, they were in love with each other and Dr. Bolton had opposed the match. So what does Mr. Henry do but meet her at the world's fair and run off and get married to her at Milwaukee, wherever that was.

This was news to me, I told Maggie, and she went on :

"They were married in Milwaukee, sir, and Mr. Henry takes her out west and makes a lot of money in them mines. She gets lonesome out there in Colorado or Arizona or Kansas, where them mines is, and she says to him, says she : 'I'm goin' home for a while, but he loves her that much he won't let her. So she waits till he is down in a mine or something, and up she jumps and off on a train she goes."

"Where did you learn all this, Maggie?"

"Well, I heard the doctor telling Mrs. Bolton, and Jimmy, his driver, heard some more, and 'twas the talk of the street. So Mr. Henry he comes after her and finds that she's gone to her father in New York. Then comes along the robber and robs him of all he med in them mines."

"What happened then, Maggie?"

"Then, thinking he could't recover, Dr. Bolton goes and telegraphs Miss Helen to come at once, as her husband is dying. Jimmy took the message. Next day Miss Helen comes to the house as sweet as ever."

"Then Miss St. Vincent was here?"

Maggie hadn't mentioned the name of St. Vincent, but she didn't notice my blunder.

"Yes, sir; and she sted here till he got better. Dr. Bolton was that hard he wouldn't forgive her for running away with Henry, and Mrs. Bolton hardly spoke to

her. We all noticed it. I was in the back parlor dusting things one day when Miss Helen kum into the front parlor followed by the doctor."

"Yer bound to go, Helen?" says he."

"Yes, uncle; I can't stay here."

"Yer won't stick to yer husband?" says he."

"He is not my husband," says she."

"You married him!" says he."

"I didn't," says she."

"The doctor was awful angry, and, says he: 'You must be mad, Helen!' says he."

"I sometimes think I am!" says she."

"May God forgive you!" says he."

"You do not believe what I have told you?" says she."

"What do you mean?" says he."

"The writing!" says she."

"Telling me you loved that fellow Powers?" said he, in an awful passion. 'How dare you, girl! How dare you insult me! Go to the ruffian!' says he. 'I'm done with you!' says he."

"With that he up and left the room."

"Was that all, Maggie?"

"No sir, Miss Helen saw me, and says she, 'Maggie, if uncle or aunt should ever be sick or get into trouble,' says she, 'will you write to me?'"

"I says, 'Yes, Miss Helen.'"

"If you'll write to this address they'll know where to find me," and she gave me a card, sir. Then she up and goes out of the house."

"Where's the card, Maggie?" I inquired.

"I gave it to Mr. Henry, sir. He looked so bad, I thought maybe 'twould do him good," and Maggie looked as though she expected me to be pleased.

It was on the end of my tongue to call her a fool; but she was not to blame. How could she know?

"The rest of that day the old doctor was almost crazy, sir. I heard him scolding his son. He called him everything. He was running all over the house with a letter in his hands. He sent Jimmy to the telegraph office with a message for Mr. St. Vincent. He went back and said some awful things to Mr. Henry. He would see no one. He walked the floor all night. Next day Mr. St. Vincent came. There was hot words in the parlor. Mr. St. Vincent began to scold. He went up to Henry's room and wanted to drag him from the bed. Things cooled down by evening and that night all three of 'em went away."

"All three of them?"

"The doctor, Mrs. Bolton, and Mr. St. Vincent."

"What became of Bol—, Mr. Henry?"

"Jimmy says he took him to a hospital."

"And they locked up the house?"

"Yes, sir; paid us all off and locked up the house."

"Do you know where they went?"

"Out west, sir."

"Did they tell you what part of the west, Maggie?"

"No. I heard Dr. Bolton say the only place to look for her would be at Mrs. Arnold's, in Chicago. She would be with a girl named Jenny or Jessie."

"So that is all you know, Maggie?" I said, handing her some money.

"That is all, sir, but I don't want this."

"Neither do I, Maggie," and I left her.

So the doctor had read Helen's statement at last! Would he be able to find her? Why hadn't I thought of Jessie before? Jessie, of whom Helen talked so much;

whom she loved so much—Jessie, who had stood up for her through everything.

“There, Mr. Powers, that’s enough for to-day.”

“All right, Miss Wilson.”

“You are feeling better?”

“No better.”

“Mr. Powers, you have spoken of a diamond ring the young lady gave you—why don’t you wear it?”

“I lost it, Miss Wilson, the night Bolton attacked me in front of Trinity Church. It was pulled off my finger in some way.”

“It must have caught in the clothing of that man—what’s his name?”

“Bolton.”

“Yes, Bolton, or he might have held it in his hand when they found him and brought him to his father’s.”

“Probably. Tell me why you are curious about it.”

“I don’t see why I should tell you anything, Mr. Powers.”

“What’s the trouble now?”

“After what you said yesterday.”

“What did I say yesterday!”

“That you didn’t like me?”

“I said nothing of the kind, Miss Wilson; you know I like you.”

“But you won’t get well to please me.”

“Oh, I don’t want to get well—what have I got to get well for?”

“Wouldn’t you marry if you got well?”

“No.”

“You wouldn’t marry anybody?”

“No!”

"Not even that young lady?"

"Oh, if Miss St. Vincent were living——"

"But Miss St. Vincent, you say, is dead."

"Yes."

"And yet you will marry."

"I won't."

"I know you will—you'll marry if I have to marry you myself."

"Look here, Miss Wilson, I'll tell Dr. Kellingwood all about your flirting. Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"You mean thing!"

"Aren't you ashamed to put such notions into a sick man's head?"

"I think it would do you good to change some of the notions in your head now. Why don't you be sensible, Mr. Powers? Did you ever hear of such a man, Miss Hutchinson?"

"Well, Miss Wilson, I never heard of such a girl as you are. I'm trying to be sensible. I'm trying to get this work off my mind, and you insist upon interrupting me. Now, tell me, what do you mean?"

"I mean just this, Mr. Powers; I have listened to your story almost from the beginning, and what I haven't heard of it Miss Hutchinson has shown me in typewriting. I have already said I am interested in it, and in you. I want you to get well. You won't get well as long as you continue to worry about this young woman. I don't believe she ever cared much for you, anyhow."

"Miss Wilson, it isn't kind of you to say that?"

"Well, I just don't care; you talk about her as if there was just one woman in the world, and that woman a blonde. Do you know that blondes are deceitful things?"

"I know nothing of the kind."

“ Well, they are, all the same.”

“ Oh, yes, I see, if she were a brunette, with a wealth of coal-black hair, dark skin, great big brown eyes, shaded by long and lovely lashes, with a jealous disposition and spiteful ways, like yourself—you delightful little witch—she would be all right.”

“ Well, if she were not the golden-haired, creamy complexioned, altogether too lovely and incomparable blonde you describe her, she wouldn't have gone back on you.”

“ Where did you learn to be slangy, Miss Wilson? It is the one thing about you that—that isn't perfection.”

“ Never mind. You knew a young lady who wasn't a bit slangy. Oh, no. Her friend, Miss Jessie Flanders, was, but that angel of yours wasn't. She was Miss Propriety. So nice that even women got down on their knees and worshipped her. What a sweet scene that was on the grand canal when you held her hand and she looked unutterable things at you! Oh, dear, and how sisterly she was, all the time laying her hand on the back of yours—the designing thing!”

“ I won't listen to you; positively, I'll get angry.”

“ Well, I am glad to see you smiling. Now this adorable creature let you kiss her—I wouldn't!—all the time telling you she was going to marry another fellow. I believe what your friends told you was true. She encouraged you. What did she sing you that song for!”

“ You mean, of course, Miss Wilson, why did she sing me that song?”

“ Oh, bother! What I mean is this—she found you happy, doing your work, well-contented with life. She led you on, made you do all sorts of horrible things for her and finally caused you to lose interest in your profession, to lose your friends, to hide yourself and to get shot.

What fools you men are. She is probably happy somewhere, never thinking of you, only when she thinks what a ——”

“Now, Miss Wilson, I cannot listen to this. You have been very kind to me and you are a very sweet girl, but please don't talk that way.”

“I hate to see you lying here, fretting over a girl that doesn't care a straw for you!”

“Why do you say that?”

“Because if she really loved you she would be here. She wouldn't neglect you. Do you think I'd neglect the man I loved? No, sir!”

“Oh, no, of course not. You wouldn't neglect him—not for a moment! You wouldn't flirt when he was absent. You wouldn't make eyes at a sick man and tell him you loved him! Oh, you are fidelity itself!”

“What sick man did I ever make eyes at?”

“At me!”

“Oh, just hear him, Miss Hutchinson! And you flatter yourself I have made love to you, I suppose?”

“You have done nothing else. You told me only yesterday that you loved me.”

“Did I ever! What a vain creature you are. I told you nothing of the kind. You asked me if I could love you. I told you I could—but it doesn't follow that I would, or that I do. How could I love a man who thinks that there never was but one woman in the world—and she a blonde! There; that's the first time you have laughed. I'll promise you one thing. If you'll get well, I shall be a sister to you. I will promise another thing; if you'll get well I'll forgive the blonde. He doesn't want you any more to-day, Miss Hutchinson. Let go my hand! Here's your crackers and milk.”

“Miss Wilson, let us be serious for a moment. Tell me why you asked about the ring?”

“Not to-day, Mr. Powers. Eat your crackers and drink your milk. Get well and you shall know all about it.”

“But if I don’t get well?”

“You must get well.”

“Won’t you tell me about it? I’m very anxious. I suspect——”

“Don’t be too suspicious. If you’ll get that story of yours finished to-morrow or next day I’ll tell you—something.”

CHAPTER XX.

When I returned to Chicago in May, 1894, everything appeared to go wrong for me. Dr. and Mrs. Bolton and Mr. St. Vincent had been here for several weeks but had departed for the west. This I learned at the Great Northern hotel. I could not find that they had made known the object of their coming or going to anybody, nor that they had instituted any inquiries. They were an excessively proud people, all of them. They would not confess that anything unusual had occurred in their families, nor that Helen was missing.

I had reason to know them, and this knowledge was confirmed by events which transpired subsequently, that Mr. St. Vincent would prefer not to find her at all if the discovery of her whereabouts depended upon newspaper publicity. He abhorred the newspapers. They frightened him. He could never admit that the private affairs of individuals came within their province.

If Helen were dead—if she had been driven to suicide; if she had been murdered—if something worse had happened—it was a matter which concerned her family and friends only, something with which the public had nothing to do. I have met hundreds of such men. Sooner or later they become chastened. Every man, it is said, finds himself in a police court at least once in his life, and every man finds himself waiting, at least one morning in his life, with anxiety or hope, after a disturbed or sleepless night, for the white-winged messenger to appear upon his

doorstep. The news which the messenger brings may mean sorrow or joy, pleasure or pain—the beginning or the end of the world for this one man, though the rest of humanity sleep on or wakes up, all unconscious, or all careless, of the tidings he receives.

Dr. Bolton and Mr. St. Vincent had started out with the determination of keeping the family secret out of the newspapers at all hazards, if such a thing were possible. No newspaper must mention the disappearance of Miss St. Vincent; no, not under any circumstances.

The father had at length become aroused to a sense of his duty. His fortune would be spent freely and his life devoted to the recovery of the daughter he had neglected, but family pride must be maintained. In this Dr. Bolton agreed with him. There must be no publication. They would employ detectives and pursue the search themselves, but the newspaper offices must be shunned and the newspaper reporters avoided. No wonder, then, that they were sent upon many a fool's errand. Their mission became known, in a quiet way at first, to small numbers of people in the various communities throughout the west and northwest, toward which they had been attracted or directed by false clues. There were persons who did not hesitate to profit by the sorrowful pilgrimage of these old people, who were hunting for one who was so dear to them—sometimes fearing they would never find her—often dreading lest they should.

What was the thing they feared worse than death—worse than suicide or murder? Why should they feel a terrible dread stealing over them from time to time? They never confessed it to each other, nor to anybody else; but Inspector Henderson told me after my arrival in

Chicago that he had read the full meaning of the horrible anxiety exhibited in their faces.

Did they fear that Helen would ever forget her name and her honor? No, not for an instant.

But why did they visit the sanitariums and insane asylums? Why were they so anxious to walk through the wards of the great public madhouses of the north-western states? They even attempted to deceive Inspector Henderson about this, when they finally went to him, but he could see plainly that the great dread which hung over them like a pall was that the sweet girl had been driven to insanity. Now that they knew everything they were compelled to acknowledge to themselves that she had been driven to the uttermost, and that the uttermost with her meant loss of reason.

It is unnecessary to tell here how the secret which these people attempted to guard so sacredly finally leaked out; how the newspapers gained possession of it; how, from one end of the country to the other the most nonsensical stories were printed concerning Miss St. Vincent, myself and that characterless scoundrel, her cousin. I have no doubt now but that Henry Bolton inspired many of the defamatory articles. He would not spare Helen to wound me—he would spare nothing to obtain revenge. Helen had left him completely to his own resources. He knew or believed that she had followed me to New York. He knew she had turned over her fortune to me. He had but two objects in life now, firstly to keep out of the clutches of the police, and, secondly, to stab the hearts of Helen and myself at every opportunity. He appeared in various places under various aliases and, as a friend of the missing girl, was ever ready to give false information that would reflect upon or blacken her reputation or mine.

This I had yet to discover, however. At the time of my arrival in Chicago in May I was entirely ignorant of the foul work which he had been doing. If Dr. Bolton and Mr. St. Vincent had been more experienced in the ways of the world, and less ignorant of the methods employed to arrive at results in these modern times—if they had told a plain, straightforward story, instead of attempting to cover up every essential fact, they might have set Helen right, and this would have resulted in setting me right. But, no, what would the respectable connections of the St. Vincent and Bolton families think! D—n the respectable connections.

“Mr. Powers!—Mr. Powers! aren’t you ashamed of yourself?”

“I beg a thousand pardons; strike that expression out, Miss Hutchinson.”

“Really, I can’t Mr. Powers, I must take everything, you know.”

“Well, personally, I would rather have it stand, but—on Miss Wilson’s account, and——”

“Oh, don’t mind me!—don’t mind me! If you think it proper to use such language in the presence of women, all right. You must be getting better. I understand that men always become profane when they are recovering from sickness.”

“Well, don’t interrupt me, then. I want to finish this story.”

“Oh, you cross thing!”

Now, I shall have to begin again. When I returned to Chicago in May, 1894, everything was changed for me—changed for the worse. Mr. and Mrs. Flanders had departed

for Europe, with the intention of making an extended tour. Miss Flanders, strange to say, had not accompanied them. Had there been a rupture? Was she with her mother, Mrs. Arnold? I could obtain no particulars without making inquiries of persons I was anxious to avoid. Inspector Henderson was not in when I called. My old newspaper chum was in San Francisco.

I visited the Press Club and met with a cold reception. My presence seemed to excite a little curiosity, mingled with surprise; there were a few rather frigid and hurried greetings and handshakes—but the old cordiality was gone. As a guest I seemed to be tolerated rather than welcomed, among men I had known and loved for many years. The almost universal depression necessarily consequent to the gayety, excitement and strain of the previous year was, to my mind, at first, accountable to some extent for the chilliness among the craft to which I belonged. But I began to take notice, one by one, of little personal slights, which convinced me that in the rooms of the Press Club I was only among acquaintances—not among friends.

I tried to interest others and become interested in the gossip of the day, but my presence in the groups into which the members formed themselves for social conversation had the effect of dispersing them. The gentlemen whom I addressed would excuse themselves upon the flimsiest pretexts, and leave me at the earliest opportunity. Where I was formerly called "Ed" or "Powers" I was now formally addressed as "Mr. Powers."

On the streets I met many persons whom I had known either slightly or intimately for several years. They bowed and passed on. On Madison street an old and

very good friend was approaching me. As he came up I smiled and extended my hand.

“Hullo, George!”

He inclined his head, looked at my hand, but did not stop.

I dropped into a newspaper office where I was formerly received with friendly words and inquiries. I soon discovered that I was in the way. I was met by an occasional surprised expression; that was all.

I called upon the law firm which had transacted Helen's business. All of the details had been attended to with the greatest exactness. The firm had forwarded an itemized account of expenses. Everything relating to the transfer which Helen had made, subsequent to the granting of a power of attorney, etc., had been perfectly arranged. In sending the last bundle of papers, the firm had written a brief letter, informing me that my check had been received, asking me to sign a receipt, acquitting the attorneys of further obligation or responsibility, and stating that with this act on my part all transactions might be considered closed. I had accepted this as the usual thing. My experience with lawyers had been very limited. I had signed and mailed the receipt with a letter of thanks.

The junior member of the firm, who came out of a private ante-room in answer to my card, looked puzzled but treated me almost as a total stranger. He neither offered me his hand nor mentioned a chair. What could he do for me?

There was in reality nothing much he could do for me. I had simply called to pay my compliments and to make a few inquiries.

“Yes?”

"Have you had a call from Henry Francis St. Vincent and Dr. Bolton?"

"Yes."

"Will you kindly inform me where they could be found?"

"We are not at liberty to give you any such information, sir."

"I may be of some assistance—some service to them."

"They do not think so—we do not think so."

"Have you any information regarding the whereabouts of Miss St. Vincent?"

The junior partner glanced at me, as only a junior partner can glance, if he happen to be of the insolent stamp.

"Mr. Powers, you will have to excuse me, sir; I am very busy." Junior partners are invariably very busy.

He left me standing in the middle of the reception-room, re-entered his private office and closed the door behind him.

I was heartsick after leaving the Press Club; I was indignant now.

There was a young man in the outer office—a young man with bushy hair, a pug nose and an air of languor. I said to him:

"Take this card to Mr. Thorn, if you please."

"You have already seen Mr. Clements, sir."

"Take this card to Mr. Thorn, if you please!"

The young man arose quickly, threw a law book on the baize-covered table, and took my card.

"Tell Mr. Thorn I must see him."

In a few moments the head of the firm appeared.

"Well, Mr. Powers," he said, "Mr. Clements has charge of the matters in which you are interested."

“He has had charge of them. I have seen him. I want you to take charge of them now.”

The experienced old lawyer must have seen that this was not an ordinary affair. At any rate, he invited me into his private office.

I told him of my experience at the Press Club and elsewhere, and of my interview with Mr. Clements. Then I asked :

“Can you explain all this?”

“I cannot understand why you should require an explanation, Mr. Powers.”

“Let us talk so that we may comprehend each other—it is all a horrible mystery to me.”

The old lawyer looked at me awhile, and in the interval he turned over and over again a paper-cutter lying on his desk. It was a painful silence. At length he spoke.

“You won the regard, I might say the love, of Miss Helen St. Vincent!”

“Yes, I believe I had her regard always—her love came later.”

“You married her at Milwaukee on the—the——”

“On the 12th of September, 1893.”

“Very true, Mr. Powers—you have a good memory. You married her under an assumed name?”

“Yes.”

“Her uncle has a letter which explains—if anything could explain—why this marriage took place. The letter was written by Miss St. Vincent. We will call her Miss St. Vincent for convenience sake. It was in the nature of a revelation to the old man, who had reared her and who loved her above everything else on earth. Her self-sacrifice overpowered him. Much as he expected from her, he could not realize that she was willing to barter her

fortune, to throw away her happiness, for his sake. How difficult must it have been, then, to understand, or to realize, how you could have exhibited such unselfish devotion for his child, as he called her. But although it was difficult for the doctor, his wife or the father of Miss St. Vincent to understand this thing, they came to Chicago in the hope of first finding the young lady and then finding you, with the view of removing every obstacle in the way of insuring the happiness of both of you, if such a thing were possible."

Mr. Thorn found in a pigeon-hole of his desk a small memorandum book, and then went on.

"Shortly after Christmas last you called here and transacted some business. You were going to Europe. We understood that you were about to make the journey at Miss St. Vincent's request. You did not then inform us that she had been with you, or near you, in New York during a part of the months of November and December, but, on the contrary, you made inquiries here regarding her address, and led us to believe that you had not seen her since the night of October 9."

"I told you the exact truth."

"Yet we have it on the very best authority that you not only knew of Miss St. Vincent's presence in New York, but that you had actually induced her to come to you; that you assumed to be her husband; that you took advantage of her; that you afterward deserted her, and that you finally dissipated not only all the cash she had transferred to you, but also all the ready money you were able to realize upon securities and other property which had passed from her hands into yours."

"This is atrociously false."

"We cannot question the source of our information, Mr. Powers."

"May I ask the name of your informant?"

"The young woman herself."

"It cannot be true!"

"But it is true, nevertheless."

"You will oblige me, Mr. Thorn, by giving me the remainder of this utterly absurd story."

"I will do so with the hope that, perhaps, you may be brought around to an appreciation of the great wrong you have done Miss St. Vincent, and that you may, as far as possible, make reparation for it."

"I shall gladly make full reparation for every wrong I have done her."

"To make full reparation is impossible, but you may be able to restore to her the remnant of her property. Miss St. Vincent's letter reached us while Dr. Bolton and Mr. St. Vincent were in Chicago. It at once opened their eyes to the real situation. The unselfish devotion you had exhibited was a sham; you had entered upon the Milwaukee marriage arrangement well knowing that it must result to your profit in a dishonorable way. I am stating to you now in almost exact terms the conclusion arrived at by Dr. Bolton, Mr. St. Vincent and our firm. We set some inquiries afloat and found that shortly after your return from Europe (for we knew it to be a fact that you had been abroad, your name appearing on the cabin lists of the Etruria, and on the registers kept by the Hotel Royal, Paris, the Kaiserhof, Berlin, and at other hotels in France, Germany, England and Ireland) you disappeared from your lodgings in New York and left no trace behind you. Your publishers and many acquaintances in New York were quite positive that for a time after your return,

or while you remained in New York, you made every possible effort to raise money, and had gone so far as to dispose of your copyrights. There can be no questioning these facts, Mr. Powers."

"Yes, I was practically penniless after my return from Europe."

"And yet you had been presented with a handsome fortune scarcely three months before!"

"Such is undoubtedly the case, but, Mr. Thorn, I have never touched a dollar of that fortune. I have never used a penny of it."

"What do you say?"

"I say that I have never used a dollar; no, not even a penny of the fortune transferred to me by Miss Helen St. Vincent; I have never seen her since the night of October 9, 1893, the night of Chicago Day. I have never received a line nor a message from her since October 10, 1893. I have never had any knowledge of her existence, whatever, since the day she left Dr. Bolton's residence, and this knowledge came to me through one of her uncle's old servants in Boston, whither I had gone, as I have come here, in search of information concerning her. Mr. Thorn, as God is my judge, I have never wronged her save once, and then, I admit, grievously, in doubting her love for me. But I have done her no injury to justify the horrible accusation which you say she has brought against me. Helen St. Vincent was either driven to insanity by the harsh treatment she received from her uncle, or the letter is a forgery from the skillful hand of her cousin, the fugitive criminal, Henry Bolton."

The old lawyer was on his feet before I had concluded. I noticed him touch the electric button on his desk. The bushy-headed boy appeared.

“Send Mr. Clements to me—Mr. Holbrook, also, if he is in!”

Mr. Thorn remained standing, his hand resting upon his desk. He was observing me closely, but in silence.

The door opened and Mr. Clements entered, followed by Mr. Holbrook, a little later. The face of the former told plainly that he was amazed to find me in private consultation with Mr. Thorn. The head of the firm broke the silence.

“This is Edmund Powers, as you know,” he said. “He desires to make a statement. He will not, I suppose, object to having it taken down by a stenographer?”

“I shall raise no objection to anything that may serve to clear this mystery up,” I replied. “First, however, let me suggest that you telegraph the Fifth National Bank, of New York, in my name or your own, but certainly with my authority, asking that the balance to my credit be communicated to you forthwith. Next, if it is possible, and with my full authority, communicate with the Manhattan Safety Deposit Company, asking that the contents of my drawer be examined and reported without delay; or, if this is not feasible, here is the key and I will give any representative of your firm such written authority as may be required. I want to satisfy you, Mr. Thorn, that there is no truth whatever in the statement that I have squandered Miss St. Vincent’s fortune, and that there is ample proof to sustain my statement that I have never touched a dollar or a penny of it, even to cover the expense incurred while engaged upon a work which Miss St. Vincent employed me to do.”

The three members of the firm were dumb for a time. Mr. Clements went to the cabinet file, and searching

through a bundle of papers, selected a letter which he spread out before me on the desk slide.

“How do you account for this?” he asked, harshly.

I read the letter :

“WORCESTER, MASS., MAY 10, 1894. MESSRS. THORN, HOLBROOK & CLEMENTS.—GENTLEMEN:—You will doubtless be greatly surprised to hear from me. In view of our past relations I think you will give this letter the consideration it deserves. I was deceived, foully deceived by Edmund Powers, who, after securing everything I possessed, except some few hundred dollars and my jewelry, deserted me in New York. I learn that he has squandered at the gaming table and elsewhere all or nearly all of my fortune.

“My uncle has abandoned me. I do not care to go to my father. Within a few days I shall leave for a western town, where I will take up my residence with my old companion, Mrs. Arnold, and her daughter. I wish to be remembered as one dead, but if anything can be done toward recovering even a portion of the property I so foolishly deeded over to Mr. Powers I hope you will interest yourselves in it, for the benefit of my uncle and aunt.

“I shall be able to make a comfortable living as a teacher.

“Do not think for an instant that I care anything about Henry Bolton. He wronged me also, but not so cruelly as Powers, and I would not do as my uncle wished for anything in the world.

“Punishment will come to both of them in due time.

“It will be useless for those who once loved me, and who may love me again, when the truth is known, to endeavor to find my hiding-place. I shall go among strangers. I shall be known by another name.

Very truly yours,

HELEN ST. VINCENT.”

“What did you say, Mr. Powers, when you had read that funny letter?”

“Why do you call it funny, and what are you laughing at, Miss Wilson?”

“Because it is funny. Don’t you think so?”

“No; I can’t make out why you should see so much humor in it, or why you should laugh over it.”

“Oh, my! What dunces some men are! Did you suppose for a moment that the beautiful, talented, high-strung girl you have been talking about all this time could have written such a basement-bargain-counter letter as that?”

“It was written in her hand. I would never have questioned a letter written and signed as this letter was, Miss Wilson, had it come to me as a friendly note, or had it touched upon a matter of slight importance. I agree with you, except in the use of slang. (I don’t understand how you ever picked up such phrases, you are so sweet every other way.) It seemed almost absurd for me at the time to question the authenticity of the letter. Her uncle, aunt, father and attorneys had not questioned its genuineness. But I felt convinced that Helen St. Vincent could never have penned such a meanly constructed, clumsily composed, humiliating letter as this. If the facts were as the letter alleged, she would have died with the secret locked up in her bosom. She was too proud ever to have written a confession of her own weakness for the eyes of comparative strangers. I knew the statements, so far as they concerned myself, to be utterly false—but here was the letter! Here were three lawyers who knew her handwriting and who knew that the authenticity of the paper had never been questioned by those who were nearest to her on earth—”

“So you did not denounce it as a—”

“You are mistaken, Miss Wilson, I did denounce it as a most infamous forgery!”

“And the lawyers—”

“Now, Miss Wilson, you know I will never get to the end of this story if I have to answer all your questions. Let me tell it to Miss Hutchinson, won’t you?”

“Oh, you horrid bear!”

I threw the letter on Mr. Thorn’s desk and said :

“This is a forgery! Miss St. Vincent never wrote, never could write such a letter.”

Mr. Thorn was resting his chin on his hand, and gave no sign of belief or unbelief in my declaration. Mr. Holbrook excused himself, as one tired of the subject, and left the room. Mr. Clements said with a contemptuous sneer:

“Miss St. Vincent once presented you with a very handsome diamond ring. That ring was worn upon the finger of a disreputable woman in this city within the past three weeks. A detective named Jennings had in some way received a hint of this fact. Mr. and Mrs. Flanders identified it before their departure for Europe. The woman made a confession that left no doubt in the mind of everybody who heard her as to your true character, Mr. Powers.”

I was boiling over with rage, but I had to control myself.

“Have you this ring?” I asked.

“No, it has been turned over to Mr. Flanders. I don’t think, Mr. Thorn,” he added, “that we need waste time upon this man. I have given my best thoughts to the case, as you know. The bank account and safety vault stories, I am satisfied, are— Oh, by the way, Mr. Powers,” he inquired, changing his tone and the subject suddenly, and looking at me with an expression I was foolish enough to think sincere, “You must be short of funds.”

“I am practically penniless.”

“A little assistance to help you bridge over the time until we shall have inquired into your statements with reference to Miss St. Vincent’s fortune, would not be amiss, eh? You need some money?”

“I frankly confess that I am in great need of ready money.”

Mr. Clements looked at Mr. Thorn, and, smiling ironically, remarked, as one who had achieved a marvelous triumph in cunning:

“You see how it is, Mr. Thorn?”

“Yes,” replied the old lawyer, “I see how it is,” and he pulled down the cylinder cover of his desk.

“Mr. Thorn,” I pleaded, “will you not inquire into the truth or falsity of my statement?”

Mr. Clements did not give his chief a chance to reply, but said with all the insolence he could command:

“Mr. Powers, you will oblige us by leaving this office. We do not care to listen to you. We are not interested in you.”

I again addressed the senior partner: “This is an outrage. You have listened to the fool, Jennings; you have listened to the scoundrel, Flanders; you have listened, perhaps, to the ruffian, Bolton; you have accepted the opinions or beliefs of two old men, utterly ignorant of the world; you have given countenance to a most damnable conspiracy. It even looks as though you, Clements, were retained to blast the character of a pure girl and to ruin my reputation.”

“Stop!” cried Mr. Thorn, rising; “you must leave this office, sir, or I will ring for an officer.”

Clements caught me by the coat sleeve of my right arm, and by taking an unexpected advantage, had turned me completely around.

He then pushed me toward the door.

I lost my self-control. My God! who could blame me for it, if I forgot everything but this latest insult! For a moment I was little better than a maniac. I grabbed a notarial seal, lying on a small letter-press table near the door, and had raised it to strike Clements, when I found my arms closely pinioned behind me.

“Come with me,” said a voice I recognized instantly; “I am astonished, Ed!”

I turned my head. Mr. Holbrook was holding the door of the ante-room ajar. Inspector Henderson was taking the weapon from my nerveless hand.

“Come with me,” he repeated. “You must be out of your senses.”

CHAPTER XXI.

The great clocks in the heart of the city were ringing the midnight hour as Inspector Henderson was saying good-by to me at the entrance to the Palmer House. The same old, unchanging, kindly light was in his eyes, but his honest face and his gruff voice were full of compassion. He seemed to be fearful lest he had said too little or might say too much, and repeatedly, after seeming to have uttered his last word, he would apparently just remember something encouraging that he had forgotten to say, and in his efforts to bring it out forcibly, yet delicately, he was certain to fondle with the golden links that bind true friends together, and bind them all the closer as the moment of their inevitable separation arrives—and the ordeal of saying farewell had to be gone over again.

We had spent the afternoon, the evening and half the night together, and he had told me things I never expected to hear—would give the world never to have heard—and, hearing, even from the lips of as true a man as ever lived, I could not believe. But my very unbelief was, strange to say, a source of the most heart rending bitterness to me, for, without suspecting it, Henderson had somehow or other convinced me that I was no longer capable of exercising my reasoning faculties in relation to matters which concerned Helen St. Vincent.

The compassionate expression of his face and the equally compassionate tone of his voice, as he talked to me through all those hours, were not made the less

depressing by the smiles which hovered around his mouth at intervals, for the smiles themselves were such as condemned or dying men receive from those about them; and he had tried to put the brightest side forward from the beginning.

“So and so,” he would say, perhaps, “is a fact—I know it to be a fact—but then you can’t always tell. I have been misled before.”

Dear old Ike Henderson! Your judgment and your sympathy never tugged harder for the mastery than they did during that dismal interview, in that dismal back office of the city hall, and while you were trying to say farewell to me that dreariest of nights!

I was listening to the statement of a man who never made his mind up hastily—who never jumped at conclusions. The more self-evident a thing appeared to Henderson, at first glance, the more suspicious he became of it, and the longer and harder he worked upon it—for to him the self-evident things of this world were the very things that demanded investigation the most.

“It is natural for me to believe in good faces, Ed,” he remarked, “but I have been fooled by the best faces I ever laid my eyes on. It is natural for me to trust the young man who is attentive to his business, kind at home and has no small vices, but I have been fooled by him. It is natural for me to place confidence in the husband who loves his family with devotion, and seems to have but one thought on earth—that of making his wife and children happy, but I have been fooled by him. I have been fooled by the frank as well as by the reserved, the gay as well as the sedate, the young as well as the old, the beautiful as well as the ugly. There is nothing in the appearance, manner, disposition, station or age which indicates the

workings of the human mind. It is all a mystery. You never can tell until you find out—don't forget that you once fooled me yourself!"

"When; how?"

"The influence that had possession of you that rainy evening at the fair might have led you anywhere—into anything, Ed. Remember the deceit, remember the lie; remember that there was something I will not mention in your heart when Jennings caught the horse by the bridle that night! Oh, yes, you were doing all this for a beautiful girl. Men prove dishonorable, rob, murder, go to hell, Ed, every day, every week and every year in this city, who might give as good, or a better excuse than you would have been able to offer had you committed, blindly, a great crime that evening for the love of Helen St. Vincent!"

"I would not commit a crime, Ike."

"No, in the heat and passion and blindness of the moment it would not be a crime—not until you were brought to your senses, not until you were awakened from your dream. Did young Hollings, over in the jail, think he was committing a crime when he fired that shot? No. Did Gillings, the LaSalle street embezzler, think he was committing a crime when he operated with his employer's money on the Board of Trade? No. One was as blind as the other. There are very few premeditated crimes in these days. We are traveling fast in all directions. Even crime is committed expeditiously—the thought, first stage; the execution, second stage; the penitentiary, third stage—and there you are; quick work, rapid transit. This is a marvelous age!"

Henderson was clearing a path as he went along.

"I never imagined, Ed, that I would find you as I did

this afternoon, with a weapon in your hand, ready to strike down a fellow-man!"

"I regret that, Ike, exceedingly, but I had almost been driven insane."

"Almost, but not quite. I knew it was not Edmund Powers, the quiet, amiable, gentlemanly, good-natured Edmund Powers, my friend, I had to deal with, but another person, altogether—a person who had been worried, disappointed, ill—who sought satisfaction everywhere and found it nowhere; who for the time being was a maniac, and I had to treat him accordingly. I hope I didn't hurt you. Ed—you wouldn't believe what I am going to say?"

"What are you going to say, Ike?"

"To prevent you from striking that blow I would have—well, I would have knocked you down."

"And you would have done right."

"There; now you are talking sense. Where I made a fool of myself, however, was that evening at the fair."

"What do you mean?"

"Had I arrested that young woman and yourself I would have saved a great deal of trouble for all parties concerned—except, perhaps, for Bolton and the young woman."

"Why do you couple them?"

"I'm only a Chicago police inspector, with the prospect of being placed on the retired list very soon, but if I had been asked to draft the declaration of American independence I would have commenced it something like this: 'We hold it to be a self-evident fact that some men are created sane, while the great majority of them are either born crazy or become so the moment they fall in love; and we further affirm that the less reason they have for continuing in love the crazier they become.'"

"Such an opening to that precious declaration would create a decided sensation, Ike."

"I know it; and yet there's more truth than poetry in it. Now, let me talk to you."

There is already incorporated into this narrative much of what he told me during the five hours in the back office. Dinner was sent into us, but Inspector Henderson had left positive instructions that he must not be interrupted. He had never for an hour lost interest in the case, he said. Had he been at all inclined to neglect it, visits and letters from my old friend would have spurred him on. In one way or another, through the home department force, and through friends on the detective details of other cities, he had kept me and my movements constantly in sight. He knew of my trip abroad and the places I had visited; of my return to New York; my brief journeys into Virginia and other states; my assumption of a fictitious name in Boston; my calls upon Dr. Bolton—even of the attempt made by young Bolton to assassinate me. This ruffian had been cunning or lucky enough to evade the detectives at all points, although they were often almost within reach of him. It was Miss St. Vincent who had visited me at the New York hotel, during my illness. She was afterward joined by Mrs. Arnold, and later on my Miss Flanders. Shortly after Helen's departure from her uncle's home the three had disappeared, but only for a short time.

"I could have informed you about the first of the present month, Ed, where you might have found Miss St. Vincent, but I thought it best not to do so. The three women had rented, furnished and were occupying a small but very neat house at Madison, Wis."

"Can she be found there now?"

“No; listen to me. I was a perfect believer in the young woman. I was ready to trust her, as you remember, even from her photograph. I trusted her the evening I met her in your company, although I had every reason, then, after that meeting with Bolton, the handshake, kiss, and all that, and the scoundrel’s escape, to be suspicious of her. The more closely I followed the case up the more satisfied I became that, no matter what appearances might indicate—I never pay any attention to them, anyhow—she was all you believed her to be. As I was saying, the three women were in Madison about the first of the present month. I thought I could understand and appreciate the delicacy of Miss St. Vincent’s position. She was your wife, and she wasn’t; she was Bolton’s wife, and she wasn’t; she was Miss Helen St. Vincent, and she wasn’t. I suppose it must have worried her at times to determine who she really was. Bolton, she would not have anything to do with, as I figured it. While Bolton lived, that is to say, as long as that marriage stood in the way, the less she saw of you the better. Besides, I learned from our friend how you had treated her at the fair. Taking it altogether, the idea of finding a quiet home in a western town was not only a wise, but a natural one. It was no difficult matter for me now to throw a friendly surveillance over her. I have never understood why Miss Flanders went to her instead of going abroad with her parents, but the fact that the young lady was with her, and had decided to stand by her, gave additional strength to my conviction that all was well—that all would turn out well, in time. In many respects this is the most remarkable case I have ever been connected with. I have

scarcely ever gone home at night believing it to be in splendid shape, but I have found all my calculations upset next morning."

"On the morning of May 3 I received a letter to the effect that a young man had called at Mrs. Arnold's home the evening before, and had remained until after 10 o'clock. There was no description because the information had come in a roundabout and unsatisfactory way, through a hired girl and a milkman. The young man had not been seen at all, in fact; his voice, however, had been heard. I located you at once. You were not the young man. Then I waited. The young man called again, remained an hour or so and drove away in a closed carriage, as he had come. No chance to get a description. Two days later, Henry Allen (you know Henry, formerly of the Times), walked into my office and told me he had seen you in the dining-room of one of the Madison hotels. I expressed no surprise, but sent a man to Madison at once. A person answering your description had been seen at the hotel named, but had gone."

"And Helen?"

"She had also gone."

"Yes, but alone?"

"No, she had gone with a young man."

"Oh, Henderson?"

Inspector Henderson paused for a time, and, asking me to be calm, continued:

"Now, Ed, of course, there is always a chance to be mistaken, and I try not to take that chance. A man—a man I know very well—calls at Mrs. Arnold's house with a package of goods from a prominent Madison dry goods shop. He explains that the goods contained in the package were purchased two days before by a young lady, who

did not leave her name, but who ordered them delivered at this address. There had been a blunder and delay in delivery. The charges were \$28.70. A lady past the middle age says to a younger lady :

“ ‘Jessie, did Helen mention this purchase to you?’ ”

“ ‘No,’ replies the younger lady, ‘but she went down town alone that day, you remember. Let me see, I think she said something to Henry about a bundle, before they left.’ ”

“ ‘Yes,’ remarked the older woman, ‘but that was another bundle. Henry had it sent to the depot.’ ”

“In the meantime the young man is listening. Ed, keep your seat! Why can’t you control yourself?”

“I don’t believe it.”

“Don’t believe what?”

“I don’t believe anything you say.”

“Ed!”

“I mean there is no truth in the story.”

It was then that one of those pitying smiles settled upon Henderson’s lips.

“But, my boy, can’t you listen to reason? Do you suppose I would tell you this if I did not know absolutely what I was talking about?”

“He didn’t, all the same.”

“What is that, Miss Wilson?”

“Oh, nothing, fire away with the tragedy.”

“Miss Wilson you are positively becoming unbearable, and, besides, you are becoming more slangy every day.”

“Never mind my slang. I only use it occasionally for relaxation. What did you say to Monsieur Lecocq?”

“You mustn’t speak disrespectfully of Inspector Henderson.”

“Oh, dear, the minute we begin to mend we become tyrannical. Just like men. They are all the same, I suppose. Here, drink this milk. Have another? Shall I move your pillow? There! What did you say after you had heard this story from Mon—Inspector Henderson? I am just dying to know.”

“I told the inspector that it was impossible for me to believe what he had told me.”

“You wouldn’t believe, you mean, that Helen had left Madison with Henry Bolton?”

“No, and my inability to believe it made me imagine that I was insane, for how could a sane man doubt such testimony as he laid before me? Bolton had been in Madison without question. He had called at Mrs. Arnold’s house, and there was no doubt in Henderson’s mind but that Helen had gone away with him. But, worse than all, it had come to Henderson through Messrs. Thorn, Holbrook & Clements that Helen had become reconciled to her husband, Mr. Bolton; and yet I could only stare at Henderson and refuse to believe everything he told me.”

[Insert after “everything he told me,” in stenographic report, but do not permit Miss Wilson to read this note: “Miss Wilson was bending over me, pretending to arrange the pillows, when they really required no arrangement, as I spoke the words repeated and quoted above. It couldn’t have been accidental. No, I am certain that the dear girl intended to show her great sympathy for me, for her lovely brown eyes were again filled with tears. It was all over in a moment, but in that moment her cheek touched my forehead ever so lightly, and before I recovered my senses she was out of the room. There is something strange about this. This note is inserted merely

for the information of the editor and must not be published under any circumstances.—E. P.]

An incident to which it is not necessary to recur threw me completely out of the lines of my story yesterday. I am glad to see Miss Wilson looking as cheerful and pretty as ever this morning.

All the arguments that Henderson could bring to bear upon me were to no purpose. I simply could not agree with him in his conclusions. It was impossible. I would not, the truth is I could not, entertain a doubt of Helen. She had not only loved me, but she had forgiven me. She had turned all her earthly possessions, or nearly all over to me. She had helped to nurse me in New York. Besides I knew well the beliefs she entertained regarding marriage. Even if she had left Madison with Bolton I could trust her. Her purity and her bravery would withstand a thousand Boltons.

“You never think of her as a woman, Ed.”

“I never think of her as anything else.”

“Women are so weak?”

“They are not.”

“They sometimes become weak.”

“No, they are sometimes deceived.”

“They become desperate—reckless, they give up the fight, Ed!”

“Helen St. Vincent never would!”

“Poor Ed!”

And there was that smile again!

“Where is Miss St. Vincent now,” I asked.

“I do not know—for God’s sake give Miss St. Vincent up—she is wrecking your life, if she has not already

wrecked it. Give her up and be a man! That is my advice.

"I may have to give her up, but I will always believe in her."

"Very well—very well. Now, what do you propose to do? Wander from place to place trying to find her? You will become a vagrant, Ed. You will lose your spirit and your self-respect."

"Can you not tell me which way to turn?"

"I cannot. Mrs. Arnold and Miss Flanders have left Madison. The furniture is stored or sold. I have had no trace of any of them since. I have been interested for your sake in the young woman. I am interested for another reason in Bolton. In finding one I may find—"

"Don't say that, Ike!"

"Well I won't, and I may be all wrong—sometimes everything gets wrong. I shall set you right with your friends and the lawyers—I had heard rumors of the kind, but I knew you were straight, Ed. You see the two old men and the old woman who came on here didn't care to have anything to do with the police, and I have never had a satisfactory statement from them. They were not frank with me. They wanted to find Miss St. Vincent, but they also wanted to shield young Bolton. And their lawyers would give me no information. It was at my own request that I was called into that law office to-day, and I'm thankful I arrived just in time. I had asked Mr. Holbrook to notify me if he learned of your presence in Chicago. He telephoned me to come over when he found you closeted with Mr. Thorn. It was lucky. Yes, I'll take care of everything. I'll set you right, Ed. You are an honorable man. That is all the more reason why you should be a sensible man."

“What does — say?”

“Your old friend has nothing to say. He believes in you, however, as strongly as ever, but—well, he says nothing.”

Henderson was shaking my hand and saying an encouraging word for the last time as the tower clocks struck 12. He walked away, but returned to the entrance of the hotel, where I had remained motionless as a statue.

“Do you need any money?”

“No, thank you, Ike. I have enough for the present.”

He left me again and again returned.

“Won’t you come to my house to-night, Ed?”

“No, thank you, Ike. I want to be alone.”

He hesitated, took my hand again, and said:

“If any harm befalls you, Ed, I shall feel that I have been the cause of it.” He was looking into my face. “You have never been a coward, Ed. Don’t, for God’s sake, do a cowardly thing to-night!”

I knew what he meant. I had been thinking of it. A cold shudder passed over me.

We parted without another word.

CHAPTER XXII.

That night, or early morning, as you will have it, not three hours after Henderson had left me, I was stumbling, but not aimlessly, among the ruins of the great exposition—down by the once beautiful lagoon, now a lifeless and forbidding slough. No, God forgive me, not aimlessly! The moon had gone down and I was groping along through the charred and ragged remnants of a structure, which, rising above the debris here and there, gave me a vague idea of the geographical lines of last summer's paradise. Fire and tempest had done their worst, as usual, without doing their best—annihilation should have begun where destruction left off. It would have been a charity. The grandest achievement the genius and handicraft of man had given the world in our time was lying shattered, crumbling and humbled in the dust. It was but another fulfillment of the prophecy.

I had been treading my way around shapeless heaps of rubbish, through tattered partition walls, over twisted irons and tangled wires, across salvage piles; losing myself in the dreary and labyrinthine mazes of a ruin that a year ago had been a stately palace—a poet's dream, a painter's inspiration, an architect's triumph! Now it was sunken low indeed, and to my mind that night it seemed to appeal, and to appeal pathetically, for the pick, the shovel and the cart! Some friendly hands—some of the millions into whose souls it had poured light and hope, music

and mirth, only a year ago—should have buried the remains out of sight!

My feet, in spite of obstacles, instinctively led me to the place I sought—the old trysting place. There were the dark outlines of the Wooded Island opposite. Here were the steps leading to the waterway, now rotting and insecure. Here had stood the Indian by his pony, and here the Cowboy by his broncho. Behind me was chaos, but, in my imagination, I beheld the golden door a hundred feet to the south.

There were no prismatic hues reflecting back the Arabian splendors of the fairy island now; no flashes from the search-lights swept the horizon; no blaze of glory from the burnished dome of the Administration building; no strolling or hurrying sightseers, in groups or couples, with merry chatter or joyous laughter, clogged the way. Everything had vanished save desolation and myself—the most desolate of all!

But this was the place and it would do. Of all places it was the best. Here I had begun to love; here I had begun to suffer; here I would seek peace!

All my plans had been arranged, hastily but carefully. Henderson had the bank account books and the key to the safety deposit vault drawer. In the morning he would receive a letter of instruction. Helen's affairs would be found precisely as they were when transferred to me.

I had left no word for her—not one word. I could not, though I tried, bid her the farewell of a suicide. Would she, too, call it a cowardly act?

I had no doubt of her love and loyalty, but something told me that her love and loyalty would bring no good to me. They were dead sea fruit. Fate had caught us in

its relentless grasp, and fate would drag us down, no matter how we might struggle against it. It would be easier for Helen when I was gone!

Everything was in good order. I owed no man. I had a few silver coins left, the change handed me by the hackman who left me near Sixty-fourth street. This was all I had in the world, for I earned nothing of late. The lawyer had discovered the truth—even my copyrights were sold, and sold at a sacrifice. Yes, everything was in order. I had wronged no man. I had always done my very best. The best I could do had been but poorly done.

My boundless hope and immeasurable ambition of a year ago seemed so contemptible now that I smiled bitterly as I contemplated them. How had I ever found pleasure in my work? Had I accomplished everything I hoped for, what a small thing it would have been, after all! In the end, though I had never met with Helen or with disappointment, I would probably sink down to the dry and dusty level of mediocrity—and leave nothing worthy of the world's remembrance behind.

Why mourn over disappointments and blasted hopes?—there was the lagoon!

“Friendships formed here?”

“Will be forgotten!”

“Love born here?”

“Will grow cold and perish!”

How clearly it all came back to me now—Helen sitting by me in the gondola, so young, so lovely, with that tender, longing, pitying expression in her face, speaking like a prophetess: “In a few months this beautiful vision shall have disappeared, and with it all the nobler sentiments it has awakened in the breasts of those it has

brought together! One shall be lost to you as irretrievably as the other."

If only my old comrades at the Press Club had treated me kindly—had spoken some cheerful words—if they had been less ready to think ill of me! Oh, well! Where was my boyhood's friend? He had nothing to say—nothing to say. So Henderson had told me. And even Ike Henderson might have been less cruel. He should have made matters look better than they really were. I would have done as much for him. And Bolton! I could not go to my death hating anybody. Perhaps Bolton was not entirely to blame. His father had talked about a family strain. The strain was as likely to be bad as good. If Henry Bolton's blood were tainted, if he inherited the viciousness that was in him from some forgotten ancestor, should he be pitied or blamed? I could forgive him—I did forgive him!

What had my life been? An utterly selfish one. Had I ever thought much about anybody but Edmund Powers? No. I had to a great extent lived within and for myself. I had worshiped at a shrine of my own making. I toiled for personal gain and glory. Where was the gain, where the glory now? I had struggled for fame and it had eluded me like a will-'o-the-wisp. Even my love for Helen St. Vincent had been a selfish one—I loved her because it pleased me to love her; her affection had come to me like something I had earned. My sacrifices for her! Why, I had taken credit for them, I had gloried in them. I had felt and enjoyed the ecstasy of martyrdom, and while enjoying it seemed to say: "Helen, look at me; see how I suffer for you! Is not this noble!"

I had not thanked God for the gifts he had bestowed upon me. I had seldom knelt in prayer save as an applicant for additional favors. The world had gone well with me—it was all I wanted—till this trouble came. Then I was ready to give it up. In peace a sycophant; in war a coward. I had lost faith in everything—even in myself.

I was on my knees now amid the ruins of a nation's glory, asking God to forgive me in this awful hour—prostrate before my Maker in the very ashes—and as I knelt and prayed, a little hymn of my own composition, and one that Helen greatly admired and had promised to put to music, arose in my recollection and became a part of my prayer.

“Would you like to hear that little hymn sung, Mr Powers?”

“Indeed I would, Miss Wilson, but I don't think it has ever been published.”

“Yes it has; I sing it myself. The music is by Miss St. Vincent.”

“I did not know that Helen had kept her promise, but she never forgot anything, Miss Wilson!”

“She never forgot anything but you!”

“You mustn't talk that way.”

“Very well. Do you want to hear the hymn?”

“Yes.”

“Now, just keep quiet and you shall hear it.”

Miss Wilson left the door slightly ajar as she passed out. I heard the opening and closing of other doors, I thought I heard some whispering. Then came the swell of an organ and Miss Wilson was singing—

TAKE THOU MY HAND.

Andante religioso. *poco rit.* *a tempo*

1. I bow my head at last, and beg thee stay Thy just com-mand! It

is not mine to question; nay, Nor un-der-stand. Let

piu mosso *cresc.* *f* *poco riten.*

all my doubts dis-solve be-fore thy light - O, Fath-er! set my err-ing

colla voce

espressivo

foot-steps right - Take thou my hand, Take thou my hand.

p

2. I bow my head, O, Lord! to thee, at last— To thee a - lone— I

poco cresc.
fear the fu - ture and ab - hor the past— My pride has flown. And

colla voce.

cresc. *poco rit.* *mf* *a piacere*
thou wilt hear, I know, this plead - ing cry— As hum - bled, chastened, pen - i -

tent I lie Be - fore thy throne, Be - fore thy throne.

poco accel.

3. I bow my head, O Lord! and crave thee wait - Wait yet one day! Give

a tempo *poco rit.* *a tempo*

me, a sup - pli - ant be fore thy gate one hours de - lay - One

poco agitato *piu lento*

pre - cious mo - ment. Lord! that I may hear 'Thou art for - giv - en' And my

colla voce

a tempo

soul's great fear Shall pass a - way, Shall pass a - way.

Take thou my b. s.

“Mr. Powers, the doctor says you may sit up a little while to-day.”

“I don’t feel equal to it, Miss Wilson.”

“Oh, you must make an effort. Tom and another male attendant will help you. Now here are some nice eggs, and here is some nice toast. That’s right. So you didn’t do that horrid thing! Oh my! How can such frightful thoughts enter anybody’s head! Do you know what I think, Mr. Powers! I think God was with you that night down among those dreadful ruins! I do, indeed. And I think he guided you away from Chicago that morning and took you to those old lodgings of yours in New York, though heaven knows! it was hard enough to find you! and that landlady of yours could tell the biggest stories with the straightest face! There was no such person as Mr. Powers in her house! It must be a mistake! It was lucky for her once that she didn’t get scratched.”

“Miss Wilson, how do you know?—”

“Don’t interrupt me, sir! All you have to do is to eat your eggs and toast—and get well. We’re tired of seeing you around here, and tired of listening to your talk—there; I don’t mean it! Don’t get cross. It wouldn’t hurt you, though, to get real mad—at somebody else, not at me. How ridiculous it is for a man like you to lie here pining day after day. It isn’t good form to pine, Mr. Powers.”

“Of all the girls I ever——”

“Yes, certainly. But you had to work, and you wrote things over all sorts of names. That little poem of yours, ‘To Helen,’ was very sweet, and ‘The Golden Door’ was lovely——”

“Miss Wilson——”

“You read the announcement of the death of Mrs. Henry Bolton, daughter of Henry Francis St. Vincent, at Yakee City, New Mexico, shortly after your arrival in New York, and then you knew all was over! You wrote about it, without using her name, and what you wrote—what you wrote——”

“Don’t cry, Miss Wilson—what does this mean, Miss Hutchinson?”

“Don’t bother, Miss Hutchinson, I’m all right now. You bore it like a man, although that announcement was not meant for you. It was intended for her cousin. If your very offensive and particular landlady had listened to reason——”

“Miss Wilson, I beg of you, tell me——”

“Lie quiet now or I’ll tell you nothing. You bore it like a man, they say, and you became reconciled to your loss—if it was a loss, considering all the misery she brought upon you. Then you worked harder than ever. You still hid yourself, and only one person in the world, your old Chicago friend, as you believed, had any knowledge of your whereabouts. For a long time Inspector Henderson and everybody else believed you had killed yourself that night. There was one person, however, who wouldn’t believe it, and who wouldn’t believe that the letter she received in your handwriting, dated the night you went down among the ruins, but postmarked several days later, was genuine.”

“What letter?”

“A letter in which you told Helen she had betrayed you, blasted your life and was the cause of your death.”

“I never wrote such a letter.”

“Of course not, and yet it was pronounced genuine by all your friends save—your old friend.”

“ And I have wronged him ! ”

“ Yes, but he is your friend still. Now, don't interrupt me, for you must sit up this morning, you know, and I shall have to get through talking before—before the doctor comes. You had become reconciled to your loss, and you were beginning to try some ‘ more ambitious work, ’ as you wrote to your friend. You see I am up to—you see I am acquainted with the facts. You even thought of ‘ breaking into the magazines again, ’ so you wrote, and you were seriously considering whether you would sign your own name once more. Oh, you were doing fine, I mean well. But all the time you were thinking of Helen. You couldn't keep Helen out of your sketches. I've got them all. Then in April last you read something in a New York paper about the missing Helen St. Vincent. Then you heard of the ‘ Personals ’ and ‘ Rewards, ’ and all the articles in the Chicago and Western papers. You suspected that something was wrong, but you didn't know what to do, poor fellow ! Finally you decided to come to Chicago. You received anonymous letters and telegrams begging you not to come, and your friend appealed to you to remain in New York, but you just couldn't. Now, Helen wasn't lost then—no, nor for a long time before. She was with Mrs. Arnold and Jessie, generally near you, but always within reach of her father and uncle. Wherever she went, however, she was followed by Bolton, until the case grew desperate. She might have given him up to the police a dozen times, but she hadn't the heart—she had too much heart to do it. He worried her so, finally, that Dr. Bolton and Mr. St. Vincent consulted with Inspector Henderson and promised to assist him in capturing Henry. Inspector Henderson was at the bottom of all the ‘ Personals ’ and

‘Rewards,’ and most of the newspaper articles. The venerable old man who was seen by the newspaper writers was neither Mr. St. Vincent nor Dr. Bolton. He was one of the inspector’s detectives. The plan was to induce Henry Bolton to expose himself in some way in Chicago or elsewhere. He was certain to write a letter or visit a newspaper office, or to do something that would give the police a clew. Everything was moving along nicely until you came along and then there was another kettle of fish.”

“I’d like to know Miss Wilson ——”

“Of course you’d like to know; you’d like to know everything at once. That’s the way with men. Talk about women’s curiosity! Why, women aren’t in it.”

“Miss Wilson!”

“Oh, I beg my Lord Chesterfield’s pardon—or is it Lindley Murray, or Richard Grant White? It doesn’t matter. So, you came and buried yourself in a third-class hotel. You read the papers in your room all day and walked the streets at night. You couldn’t work. You were all torn—you were all upset again. Twice the police had almost mistaken you for Bolton, but they were handling the case carefully. One night you thought you recognized a figure you had seen in the dark before—do you remember this ring?”

“Why, that is my ring—that is the ring Helen gave me; the ring I lost in the struggle with Bolton!”

“You followed that figure into a restaurant, not a very nice one; a place in a basement, somewhere. You saw the figure take a chair, and you managed to get close to it, so that you and the man the figure belonged to sat back and back. Another familiar figure came in and sat by the first one. You were in the shadow of an electric light,

they tell me, and were bending over a cup of coffee, so that you were not recognized. Then you listened and you heard Henry Bolton tell William P. Flanders of all his rascalities, and you heard William P. Flanders encourage him in them. They had made life miserable for Helen St. Vincent, and they laughed over it. They had made life miserable for you, and they laughed over it. They had brought trouble down upon Helen's father, her uncle, her aunt, her old nurse, and they seemed to enjoy it. They made plans for the future that promised more rascality, and Mr. Flanders assured Bolton that he would not be molested by the police, as he knew people who were higher up than Henderson. You heard them make a slighting remark about Jessie Arnold, who used to be Jessie Flanders; then you overheard Bolton use the name of Helen St. Vincent disrespectfully and then both of you were rolling on the floor, while Mr. Flanders was trying to escape, for he could not afford to have his name mentioned in connection with an affair of this kind."

"The——"

"Never mind. You were separated. You were regretting that you had soiled your hands or your clothing by coming in contact with such a character as Bolton, and were passing up through the rear steps, to avoid the crowd in front, and to make your way to the hotel through the alley, when you heard the report of a pistol. You knew what it meant. After that you knew nothing for nearly two weeks. Henry says it is a miracle that you escaped with your life, but a greater miracle still that you escaped with your reason."

"For God's sake, Miss Wilson, what do you mean? Who is Henry?"

"Why, Dr. Henry Kellingwood, of course, a friend of Miss Arnold's."

"The Dr. Kellingwood who comes here?"

"Certainly."

"Then, was it he who left Madison with Helen?"

"Why, yes. How stupid you are! It was he who took Helen to her uncle, and it was he who afterward took Mrs. Arnold and Jessie to Helen. You see Bolton was determined to annoy Miss St. Vincent in Madison and everywhere else. She had to give up the idea of a quiet western home, or give Bolton up to the police."

"You say he is a friend of Miss Arnold. What do you mean?"

"He is going to marry her next week."

"Miss Wilson, he has not acted honorably with you!"

"What do you mean, Mr. Powers?"

"He has made love to you in this room. I have seen it!"

"Well, what of that?"

"What of that! And you tell me he is going to marry Jessie Arnold!"

"Well, I'm Jessie Arnold! Didn't you know it? What stupid things men are! Now don't stare at me!"

"I must be dreaming!"

"You were never as wide awake in your life. You have borne misfortune bravely—don't be a child now. I have other things to tell you. This ring was taken from the finger of a corpse at the morgue—the corpse of a young man who did the dreadful thing God saved you from doing that night among the ruins. You know who that man was. He probably got the ring from Mr. Flanders. You have forgiven him, I know. Let us forget him. Mr. Flanders will not trouble you again. He was very kind to me, and you must never speak of him

disrespectfully. Yes, a congestive chill. Mr. Jennings is a gripman on the State street line. He will advance steadily and may get an open car this summer. Inspector Henderson and your old friend will be down to-morrow. Is there anything else I can tell you? Don't be afraid to ask."

"Where is Helen St. Vincent?"

"Here!"

"In this hospital?"

"This is not a hospital—what put that notion into your head? You were removed from the hospital long ago—when you were so very ill."

"Then, where am I?"

"In your own home—in Kenwood!"

"In my own home?"

"Your's and Helen's—and here is your night nurse. Come in!"

"Oh, Helen!"

"My dear husband!"

As I introduced this history to the public for the purpose of setting my friend, Edmund Powers, right, it is only proper that I should say a word or two in closing my editorial labors. Helen insisted upon a double marriage ceremony. She was married to Edmund Powers in the first instance as Mrs. Henry Bolton, according to the Presbyterian ritual. In the second instance she was married as Helen St. Vincent, and a Roman catholic clergyman tied the knot, as a civil contract. It is unnecessary to remark, perhaps, that one marriage ceremony was entirely satisfactory to Jessie Arnold and Dr. Henry Kellingwood. These marriages occurred a week ago. I have just said good-by to four of the happiest creatures in

the world. The sea voyage will make a new man out of Powers. As I glance over these pages for the last time I am free to confess that the narrative reads like a romance, and yet it tells of things so very real to me!

J. J. F.

[THE END.]

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